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50 Prep Stars
12 Guys to Watch

PLUS

Women's
Sweet 16

Tim Duncan

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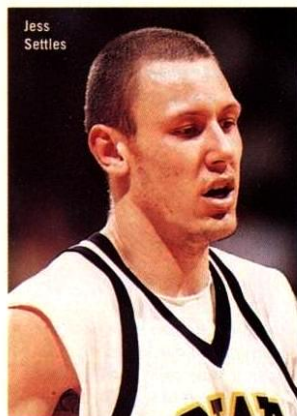
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Page 20.

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3 seconds



Jess Settles

DECISIONS

When in doubt, stay put

Christmas came early to University of Iowa hoops fans this year. Star forward Jess Settles, who averaged 15.1 points and 7.5 rebounds as a junior last year, declared for the NBA draft. Then he played at the NBA's pre-draft camp last spring, had his game critiqued by GMs—and, taking their advice, returned to school. Settles could go home again because he hadn't signed with an agent, which would have forfeited his eligibility.

"You never know what's going to happen," Settles says. "A couple of years ago, one of our players, Chris Street, got killed in an auto accident. It makes you think about life. There's always a possibility of a career-ending injury. So I thought I'd give it a shot."

Many college basketball observers bemoan a system that allowed a record 41 early entries to apply for the NBA draft. Settles saw the experience as an education.

"It was a no-lose proposition," Settles says. "Like going to a Nike camp in high school. I talked with a lot of GMs. They told me it would be best to return and polish my game."

The Hawkeyes need all his three-pointers—he hit 40 last year—as they regroup after losing four of their top six players. And Settles should find things easier at the next pre-draft camp when he competes with all those underclassmen. After all, he's been there.

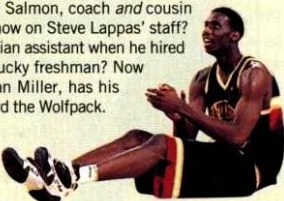
COACHES

BUY ONE, GET ONE FREE

The play's called quid pro quo. The high school coach steers his prize pupil to that one lucky university. The college coach repays the favor with a job as an assistant coach.

Or do you think it mere coincidence that Jim Salmon, coach and cousin of Villanova freshman forward Tim Thomas, is now on Steve Lappas' staff? And that Rick Pitino was just looking for a Canadian assistant when he hired Simeon Mars, whose star center is now a Kentucky freshman? Now we hear N.C. State's new assistant coach, Sean Miller, has his brother and top-50 prospect Archie leaning toward the Wolfpack.

Nothing new here—it's as old as coaches needing to win to keep their jobs. Here's a look at some other package deals past, present—and future.—John Gustafson



Tim Thomas

PLAYER/SCHOOL	ON THE MOVE	TIES	THE ARRANGEMENT
Danny Manning, Kansas, '84-88	Ed Manning	Father	Larry Brown liked Danny's dad so much he took Manning Sr. with him when he jumped to the Spurs.
Stanley Roberts, LSU, '88-90	Jim Childers	HS coach	Dale Brown's administrative assistant for eight years just left to be Baton Rouge's 15-and-under AAU coach.
Jalen Rose, Michigan, '91-94	Perry Watson	HS coach	Used assistant job to jump to top spot at Detroit Mercy.
Damon Thornton, N.C. State, '96-	Mark Phelps*	HS coach	A State administrative assistant since May, Phelps has the "Pack in the hunt for the one he left behind, star forward Kenny Inge.
Attila Cosby, Uncommitted	Troy Weaver	AAU coach	Weaver became a Pitt assistant in August. Panther coach Ralph Willard is counting on the 6'9" Cosby to follow.



Tree pruned

The Tree has finally been chopped down—and it's about time. In 1992, the Stanford mascot swung its branches at Cal fans. Last year, it fell on Cal's Oski the Bear. This year, when ESPN's SportZone asked fans to vote for their favorite mascot, two Stanford students wrote a wickedly clever computer program that counted every vote for the Tree 100 times. It worked so well that it crashed SportZone's computer system. SportsZone rebooted, ran another poll, and awarded top honors to Wisconsin's Bucky Badger. The Tree's punishment: a ban from ESPN online competition until the year 2002.

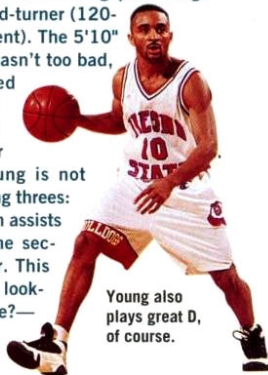
november 13th: Start of eight-day stretch to sign high school stars.
15th: Women's preseason NIT begins. **20th:** Men's preseason NIT begins.

december 4th: Cincinnati vs. Kansas: Dress rehearsal for NCAA Final.

THE GUNNER

Call him 3-D

He's one of 13 children, all of whose first names start with the letter D, so Fresno State's Dominick Young is used to doing something special just to get noticed. And Young certainly caught new Fresno coach Jerry Tarkanian's eye last year, sinking a nation co-high 4.1 three-point shots per game, although his shooting percentage was hardly a head-turner (120-316, or 38 percent). The 5'10" guard's timing wasn't too bad, either—he nailed game-winning treys in the final minutes of four games. But Young is not just about hoisting threes: he led the WAC in assists and steals for the second straight year. This season, Young is looking to—what else?—three-peat.



Young also plays great D, of course.

JUCOS

COMING ATTRACTIONS

They are the underground talent pool for college hoops. Here's this season's best juco player by position. A year from now, watch for them in prime time.

JERMAINE OUSLEY

Tyler (Texas) JC

Takes off from free-throw line to jam. Drives lane for lay-up. Nearly unstoppable. Next stop: Cincinnati, Washington, or Arizona.

LEE NAILON

Butler County (Kan.) CC

Terrific in close, at 6'9" handles ball well enough to key transition game on both ends of floor. Tops most teams' wish lists.

FRANCISCO ELSON

Kilgore (Texas) College

Shot-blocker, needs more than 227 pounds on seven-foot frame. 'Bama, Cincy, Oklahoma State early favorites.

RAFER ALSTON

Fresno City (Calif.) College

NYC product has terrific court vision, nose for ball, no fear of taking three or charge. Tark's already signed him up for '97.

C.J. BRUTON

Indian Hills (Iowa) CC

Aussie star can drive or shoot from well beyond arc. At 6'2", can handle point or wing. He's headed to Iowa State.

THE GODFATHER

Everybody comes to Rick's

Some people are born coaches. Others work for Rick Pitino.

For ambitious assistant coaches looking to step up, serving a stint with Little Rick is nothing less than a fast track to a plum job. And why not? In his 16 years on the bench, Pitino has had the Midas touch, turning perennial losers into legitimate contenders. He led Providence to the Final Four in 1987, got the Knicks 52 wins in 1988-89, and brought a national championship back to Kentucky after



18 years as a bridesmaid. He's had but two losing seasons: his first year with the Knicks and his third at Boston University. Work with him, you learn how to win.

Along the way, Pitino's developed a pool of talented assistants that other programs just love to fish from. Over the last few years, some of basketball's most coveted head coaching jobs have been landed by Pitino's protégés.

Here are some of his more notable apprentices:

BILLY DONOVAN:

FLORIDA
Protégé (Providence, Knicks player; Kentucky assistant) gets sexy SEC job after just two years as head man at Marshall.

HERB SENDEK:

N.C. STATE
Two stretches with Rick (Providence, Kentucky) help earn him a chance to do for the Wolfpack what he did for Miami of Ohio (63-26).

RALPH WILLARD:

PITTSBURGH
His three years with Pitino in New York and Kentucky haven't helped the Panthers yet—they're 20-35 in his two years there.

TUBBY SMITH:

GEORGIA
Former Wildcat assistant went 79-43 with Pitino's run-and-gun in Tulsa. He's now looking to make his fourth straight Sweet 16.

BERNADETTE

LOCKE-MATTOX:
KENTUCKY WOMEN
Pitino made her the first female assistant coach in a men's Division I program. Now she tries to build a power in the same building as her mentor.

JEFF VAN GUNDY:

NEW YORK KNICKS
Pitino gave him his break as a Providence grad assistant ('86-87). Now he's the youngest head coach in the NBA.

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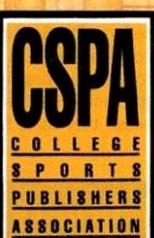
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EBB



FINAL FOUR

Need a ticket?

By Shaun Assael Almost one in 10 people who applied for Final Four tickets last spring have them in their hands right now. Not bad, considering last year just one in a 100 made it to the Meadowlands. But if you didn't know the application deadline came and went in April, you're not looking to high-five the NCAA for choosing the 47,000-seat RCA Dome in Indianapolis. Not when more than twice the number of tickets reserved for the public are going to NCAA insiders.

Sure, nearly a third go to supporters of the Final Four schools. But there's a good chance the guy across the aisle will be a dentist who ponied up a week's worth of root canals for a soft drink bottler's sponsor seats, or a stockbroker who's giving an ACC official a little friendly advice.

Yeah, it's a big flea market out there, and until the NCAA starts checking IDs, there are only three things that will get you inside: 1) Money.

2) Whom you know. 3) Whom you know.

So, for the nonconnected, here's a survival guide.

Going up, up, up

Call any ticket broker listed in a metropolitan phone book, and you'll find the going rate to get into the Dome is \$350. It's anyone's guess what the street scalpers will charge as it gets closer to Game Day. As far as the prime seats go, Indianapolis broker David Foote figures he'll get in the neighborhood of \$7,500 for a seat in the first 20 rows.

"There are just so few of them around," he sighs.

Which raises the question: where exactly do brokers get these tickets? Not even coaches get the sweet seats. They go to sponsors, NCAA officials, and folks from the local convention bureau.

Reselling tickets isn't illegal in Indianapolis, but it is a violation of the agreement NCAA members sign when they purchase the seats. That's why brokers don't go looking at sellers' IDs. Said one, "If someone wants to sell me 10th row, I'm burying my head in the sand. I don't want to know where they came from."

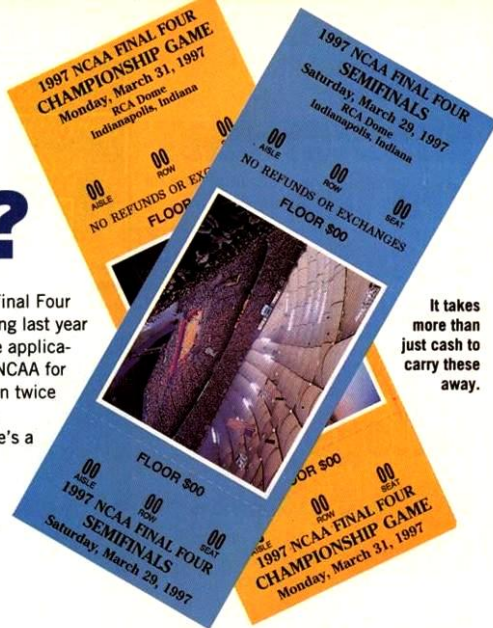
Really, we're just good friends

Since Division I coaches are eligible to buy two seats, the lobbies of their hotels are always hotbeds of furtive looks and dealmaking. This year, the coaches are scattered among 12 hotels, but the headquarters is the Hyatt Regency downtown.

Just be careful. They might be a little jittery after what happened to John Calipari last year. The ex-UMass coach gave his seats to a friend named Mike Toney. Problem was, Toney just happens to have been barred from Las Vegas for having links to organized crime. When the story broke, Toney insisted he had simply given away the hard-to-come-by tickets to a New York hotelier. Why do we think he got more than fresh flowers in his room?

Try the palm grease

It never hurts to befriend a local pol, or better yet, be the Consul General of Argentina. In New Jersey last year, Gov. Christine Whitman received 50 seats. According to the official list, just five of those were filled by her Garden State constituents. The rest went to folks like The Honorable Guillermo McGough (and, of course, Mrs. Honorable). This time around, pols will be given a "minimal" number, says a spokesperson for local planners.



It takes more than just cash to carry these away.

Root for the home team

Final Four schools each get about 3,500 tickets to the games this year, and their students aren't blind to temptation. Kentucky held a lottery last year and gave winners their seats Saturday in New Jersey, hoping to cut down on scalping. Enterprising students just had the buyers fly to New Jersey with them. If you're a frosh choosing between painting your face or paying a year's tuition, remember: the only school color that matters is green.

It's the Boss on line one

If all else fails, pretend to be a rock star. Last March, Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim got a call from a self-proclaimed representative of Bruce Springsteen, who said, "You know, the Boss is a real big 'Cuse fan." Boeheim was born in the USA, but not the day before. He hung up.

Said the coach, "Now if it was Bruce himself...."

Okay Buddy, here's that 98-line phone...

Last year the NCAA had fans call a 900 number for applications to its computerized ticket lottery. They didn't make any friends, but—at \$1.50 a pop—they did make money: most of the 167,900 applications were ordered by phone. They'll probably drop the 900 number for this year, since they already charge two bucks for handling. The opening date of the '97 application period hasn't been set yet. If you haven't heard anything by March, call: 913 339-1906. It's the main line for the NCAA. Say, we've saved you a directory assistance call. Got any extras?

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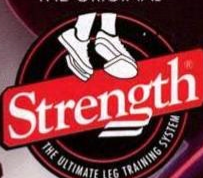
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THE FAN

Waiting game

On Sept. 10, a 45-year-old man named Wally Clark drove his 1991 Ford Fiesta down the Avenue of Champions in Lexington and parked it in front of Memorial Coliseum on the campus of the University of Kentucky. Why? So he could be first in line to watch the school's first open basketball practice on Oct. 18.

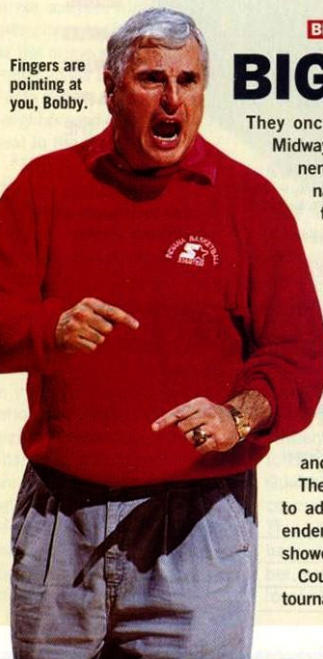
That's 39 days. In a Ford Fiesta. For a practice.

Even in a state that boasts a national championship team and legendary fans, this behavior might be seen as worthy of a straitjacket.

But stop and talk to the Vietnam vet for a few minutes as he sits in his lawn chair in front of the Coliseum, and you kind of understand. See, it's more than just being first in line for the start of basketball season. It's beating those darn Vallandingham of New Albany, Ind.

For years, the Vallandingham—two brothers and their dad—were perennial champs. They used to arrive a couple of days before the Coliseum doors opened for Big Blue Madness. But Clark, who calls Lexington home, upped the ante last season by arriving at the Coliseum 18 days prior to tip-off. He caught a cold and lost 25 pounds, but he was first, dammit.

This year, Clark couldn't take any chances—arriving more than a month early. Who knows what those nutty Vallandingham might be capable of.—Pat Forde



Fingers are pointing at you, Bobby.

BIG TEN

BIG PROBLEM

They once were college hoops' Monsters of the Midway, scooping up top recruits, pounding opponents with methodical precision, and dominating NCAA Tournaments. But these are not the best of times for the Big Ten.

The conference hasn't had an NCAA champion since Michigan in 1989, and former powers Indiana, Michigan, and Purdue have two wins combined in the past two Tournaments. That kind of record doesn't help recruiting; neither does the fact that the NBA is looking elsewhere for talent. The Big Ten has produced 11 first-round draft picks in the past four years, compared to 20 for the ACC and 14 each for the Big East and SEC.

The conference is finally giving serious thought to adding a tournament, the kind of seasonender that's long been used by other leagues to showcase their players on national TV.

Could help. And it would ensure at least one tournament champion for the Big Ten every year.

THE BEST

We got winners

You don't know Howie Schwab, but you should. The ESPN man-behind-the-scenes is to college basketball what Euclid is to geometry—he knows all the angles. So remember him when it's time to fill out your bracket for March's madness. With that in mind, here's Howie's read on the best college hoops has to offer.



The old guard at UMass.

BACKCOURT: Carmelo Travieso and Edgar Padilla, UMass. Like Siegfried and Roy, the talented tandem can make things disappear. Usually, opposing guards.

OFFENSE: Kentucky. Sure, Tony Delk and Antoine Walker will be putting up their points in the NBA this season. But who else has Ron Mercer, Derek Anderson, Wayne Turner, and Jared Prickett to step in?

DEFENSE: Princeton. It doesn't take an Ivy Leaguer to make this call. Pete Carril is gone, but the tenacious Tigers will lead the nation in scoring defense for the ninth straight season.

FRESHMAN: Tim Thomas, Villanova. You can make a case for Winfred Walton at Syracuse and Arizona's Mike Bibby, but Thomas is ready for the next level—now.

SENIOR: Tim Duncan, Wake Forest. He would have gone No. 1 a year ago. Another year won't change the NBA's thinking—or ours.

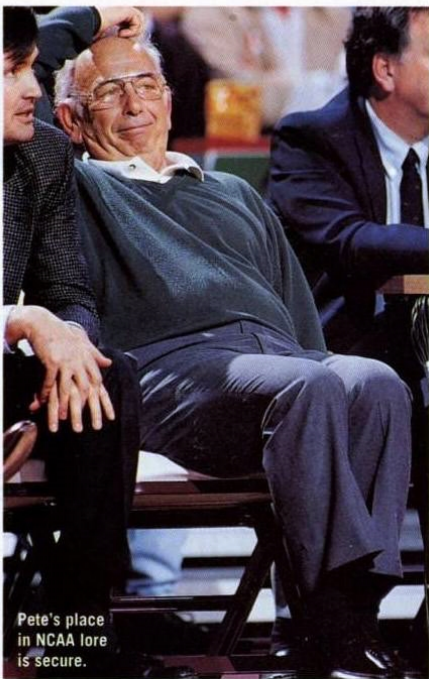
THREE-POINT SHOOTER: Pete Lisycky, Penn State. Just ask Penn about the 6'4" junior—he torched the Quakers with a 9 for 10 salvo last December.

PLAYER YOU DON'T KNOW: Anthony Parker, Bradley. This versatile, all-round player could make Braves fans forget the school's most famous alums, Hersey Hawkins and Charley Steiner.

LITTLE MAN: Shawnta Rogers, George Washington. At 5'3", he has as big an impact as a player two feet taller.

march 9th: Tournament selection time. Who's in, who's out. **27th:** NIT Championship. **29th & 31st:** Final Four at Indianapolis: Jayhawks in a walk. **30th:** Women's title game.

april 9th: Start of five-week window to sign late recruits.



Pete's place
in NCAA lore
is secure.

MOMENTS

The Carril is gone

He was Yoda in a Princeton sweater, the cerebral coach no team wanted to draw in the first round of the NCAA Tournament. For 29 years, Princeton coach Pete Carril employed a maddeningly patient offense and a suffocating defense to dominate the Ivy League and frustrate the big boys in the Big Dance. His overachievers won 514 games, 13 Ivy titles (nine outright, four ties), and led the nation in defense 14 times, including the past eight seasons. Now that Carril's left the college game for an assistant coaching position with the Sacramento Kings, it's time to take a look at some of his most memorable moments.

Dec. 28, 1969: The Tigers come *thisclose* to doing the unthinkable—beating John Wooden's UCLA Bruins at Pauley Pavilion. Sidney Wicks' jumper at the buzzer gives UCLA a 76-75 win.

March 23, 1975: Princeton captures the NIT—when it still means something—by toppling Providence, 80-69, at Madison Square Garden. The Tigers become the first and only Ivy League school to win a national basketball title.

March 17, 1989: The lowest-seeded team in the field, the Tigers take No. 1 seed Georgetown into the final seconds of their NCAA first-round game before falling, 50-49. The Hoyas need two blocked shots in the final eight seconds to escape with the victory.

1990-91 Season: Princeton goes 24-3 and finishes the season ranked 18th, the highest an Ivy League school has been ranked since 1979.

March 14, 1996: Princeton knocks off defending NCAA champion UCLA in the opening round of the Tournament. The Tigers do it in typical Princeton fashion, holding UCLA scoreless the final *six minutes* to win, 43-41.—Roger Jackson

Monster Blocks.

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Connecticut (#6) vs. Western Kentucky (#7), Nov. 17, 2:30 pm ET on ESPN2
Stanford (#1) vs. Alabama (#2), Nov. 17, 5:00 pm ET on ESPN

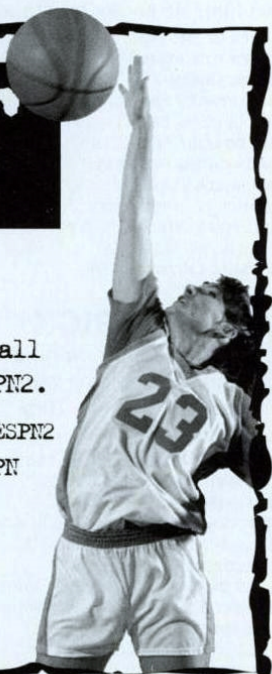


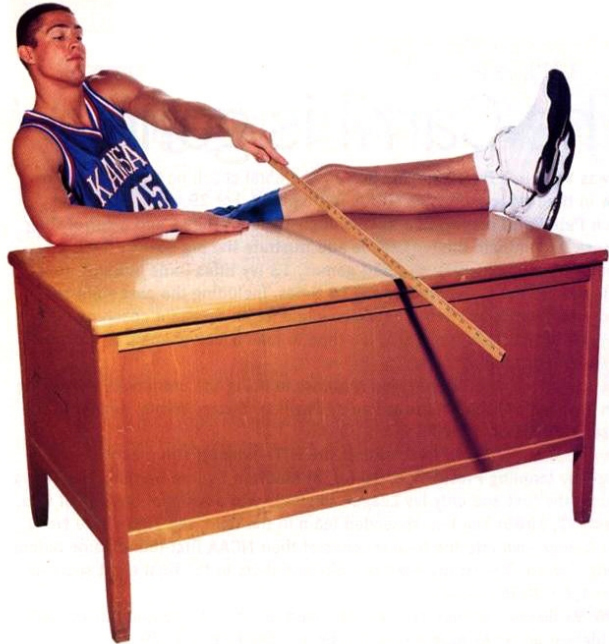
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See Di

Dickie V won't be the only one taking lessons from Raef LaFrentz.

Our gang agrees: the Jayhawks get theirs for staying in school.

DICK VITALE

"Despite losing John Wallace, the Juice will have another outstanding season. Jimmy B will make my All-Whiner list, but I love him. He knows how to win."

PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Tim Duncan
PLAYER TO WATCH: Maurice Taylor
TOP FRESHMAN: Tim Thomas
CONFERENCE TO WATCH: The ACC is flat-out going to be loaded."
BEST COACH: "All of them."
COACH ON THE HOT SEAT: "All of them."
CINDERELLA TEAMS: Clemson, George Washington, Providence, Rhode Island
FINAL FOUR: Cincinnati, Kansas, Kentucky, Wake Forest
NATIONAL CHAMP: Kansas

MIKE PATRICK

"Cinderella teams now have something in common with on-time mail delivery. They don't exist anymore."

PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Tim Duncan
PLAYER TO WATCH: Ron Mercer
TOP FRESHMAN: Nate James
CONFERENCE TO WATCH: "The ACC will have three teams in the top 10."
BEST COACH: Mike Krzyzewski
COACH ON THE HOT SEAT: Pat Kennedy
CINDERELLA TEAM: George Washington
FINAL FOUR: Cincinnati, Kansas, Kentucky, Wake Forest
NATIONAL CHAMP: Kansas

DIGGER PHELPS

"The NCAA, the NBA, and the TV networks need to work together to stop high school players from entering the draft."

PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Tim Duncan
PLAYER TO WATCH: Paul Pierce
TOP FRESHMAN: Tim Thomas
CONFERENCE TO WATCH: Conference USA
BEST COACH: Bob Huggins
COACH ON THE HOT SEAT: "Not a topic I want to get into."
CINDERELLA TEAMS: Clemson, George Washington, Fresno State, Michigan, Tulane
FINAL FOUR: Cincinnati, Kansas, UCLA, Villanova
NATIONAL CHAMP: Cincinnati

CLARK KELLOGG

"I'll get 'crazy silly' on-air when Tim Duncan makes one of his patented low-post moves."

PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Tim Duncan
PLAYER TO WATCH: Anthony Parker
TOP FRESHMAN: Winfred Wallace
CONFERENCE TO WATCH: "All of them."
BEST COACH: "Too many do a five-star job."
COACH ON THE HOT SEAT: "It's like comparing Phoenix to Palm Springs. Both are hot places to be, it's just a matter of how hot."
CINDERELLA TEAMS: Iona, St. John's, Stanford, Temple, UMass
FINAL FOUR: "Check with me in February."
NATIONAL CHAMP: "Ditto."

CHARLEY STEINER

"Dear Bradley: I have named your coach as the best and your team as a Cinderella. That is this year's alumni contribution. Quit calling."

PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Tim Duncan
PLAYER TO WATCH: Brevin Knight
TOP FRESHMAN: Tim Thomas
CONFERENCE TO WATCH: Western Athletic Conference
BEST COACH: Jim Molinari
COACH ON THE HOT SEAT: Jim Harrick
CINDERELLA TEAMS: Boston College, Bradley
FINAL FOUR: Kansas, Kentucky, Villanova, Wake Forest
NATIONAL CHAMP: Kansas

MIKE TIRICO

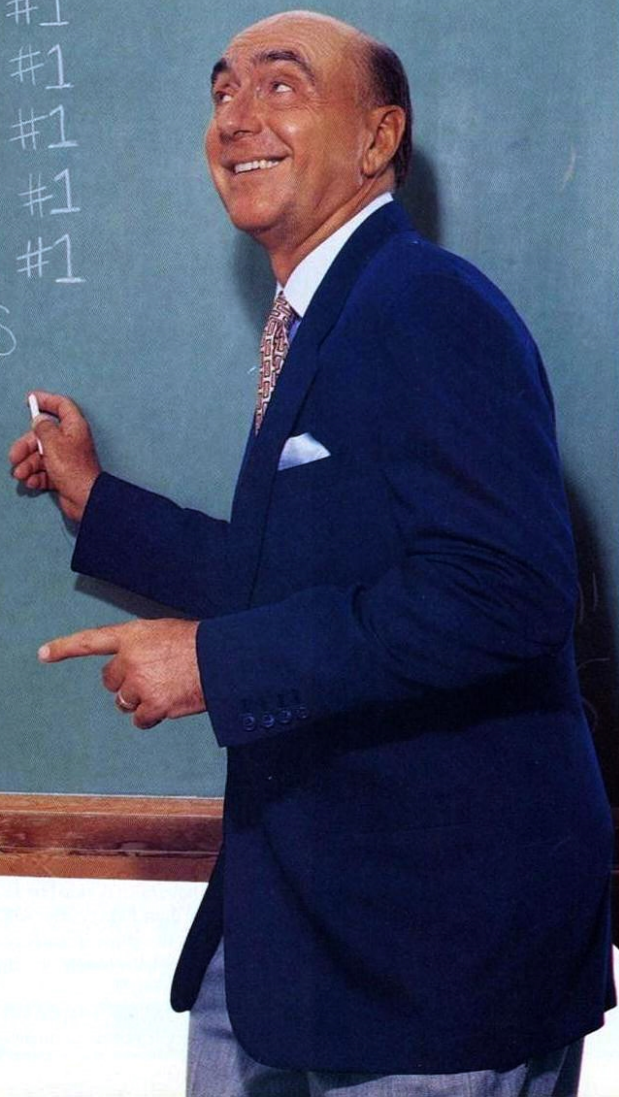
"A Big Ten team will make the Sweet 16 for the first time in three years. And Michigan will go all the way to the Elite Eight."

PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Tim Duncan
PLAYER TO WATCH: Brevin Knight
TOP FRESHMAN: Tim Thomas
CONFERENCE TO WATCH: Western Athletic Conference
BEST COACH: Mike Krzyzewski
COACH ON THE HOT SEAT: Randy Ayers
CINDERELLA TEAM: South Carolina
FINAL FOUR: Kansas, Cincinnati, UCLA, Wake Forest
NATIONAL CHAMP: Kansas

prime picks

ck Predict.

KANSAS IS #1
KANSAS IS #1
KANSAS IS #1
KANSAS IS #1
KANSAS IS #1
KANSAS IS



the strategy/Allen Barra and Rob Neyer

Princeton? Syracuse? We still say there's some method to the Madness.

WE'RE NOT COMPLETE MORONS. We know there's no science to filling out an NCAA Tournament bracket. Spend all week poring over the pairings before penciling in your choices, you're still going to spend the next three weeks cursing the woman in accounting who's riding her cute team mascots theory to the top of the charts. Still, we're intrigued by certain March tendencies. Here's a handful that at least will give you a shot.

1. GO WITH THE CHALK EARLY.

Everyone wants to be able to brag about that big first-round upset they called. Fine. But don't get carried away. Sixty-four teams are invited to the Dance, but only 56 need bother to RSVP. Since 1985, when the Tournament expanded to its present size, no 16th-seeded team has beaten a No. 1. We're not talking a lucky bounce here or there, either: No. 1s have outscored No. 16s by an average of 23 points a game. No. 2s are darn close to a lock as well. They've lost only two of their 48 matchups (Syracuse in 1991, Arizona in '93).

2. DIAL 9. You want a big first-round upset? The 6-11 pairing gives you a decent chance of bagging one. Over the last 12 years, No. 6 has managed only a 32-16 record. For an even smarter—if less dramatic—pick, go with a No. 9 to knock off a No. 8. In these games, the lower seed actually has the upper hand, and by an impressive margin: 28-20. Makes sense—after all, these teams

are supposed to be the most evenly matched of all the first-round opponents.

3. FOUR-BAGGING. As you get farther into March, the seeds continue to hold up, with 1 vs. 2 a particularly tight rivalry (13-11). But 1s against anyone else? Forget it. Top seeds have lost only 15 times in the second and third rounds over the last 12 years. The 2s haven't done badly, either, losing only 22 times. But here's where you make your move: of the 11 games that pitted a 12 against a 4, the lower seed won six. True, to chalk this one up, you have to have bucked the trend in round one.

Fine, the favorites win, except when they don't. So how do you decide which 6 is going to pull off the upset, which 9 is the smart first-round pick? Listen up.

4. COACHING EXPERIENCE MATTERS. Not a lot, but enough to make a difference. Especially when it's close. In all the games since 1985, we found that the teams coached by Big Dance rookies scored 2½ fewer points per game than other teams seeded similarly. So what? Well, over that time, both the 6-11 games and the 7-10 games have been decided by an average of fewer than four points. Knowing who's calling the shots in those games could help you pick a couple of winners.

5. HOME COOKING. There's a "home state advantage," especially for higher seeds

in a particular matchup. On average, teams playing close to campus exceed expectations by a hefty 8.4 points per. The effect for the lower seed? Just over one point. Bottom line: don't bet against favorites if they can sleep in their own beds.

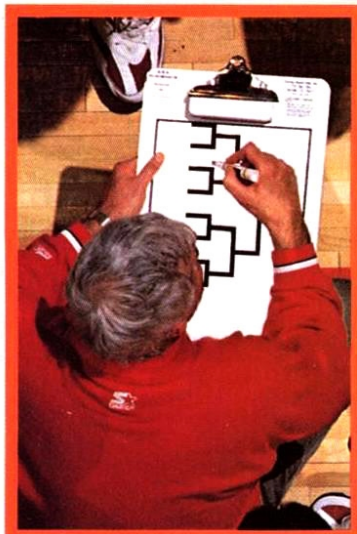
6. NOT THE POINT. Despite what experts say, a team doesn't really need an experienced point guard in March. In fact, since 1985, teams with senior point guards have scored about one point less per game than other teams with their seed. Could be that seniors get the starting nod because they've waited their turn, not because they're the best option. Go with sophs and juniors. Freshmen? They still tend to get rattled by the big-time pressure.

7. IT HELPS TO BE BIG. But not nearly so much as you'd think. Not in March, anyway. Since 1985, the taller team has scored less than one point more than the matchup would have you expect. Take talent over towers every time.

8. CONFERENCE CALLS. When in doubt, go with teams flying the colors of the SEC, ACC, and Atlantic 10. All have won substantially more games than their seedings would suggest. That is, if the seeds hold true throughout the Tournament. (For example, a No. 3 should win twice, beating No. 14 and No. 6 before falling to No. 2.) The SEC has won 125 percent of its target number, the ACC 117 percent, the A-10 111 percent. While you're at it, take a pass on the Big Ten and Big Eight (now 12). Both fall far short. But the worst of all is the Pac-10, which has bagged only two-thirds of the wins it should have.

It seems so easy, no? Right up until that pudgy little Orange guy shows up on the sidelines of the final game and proves the cute mascot theory rules after all.

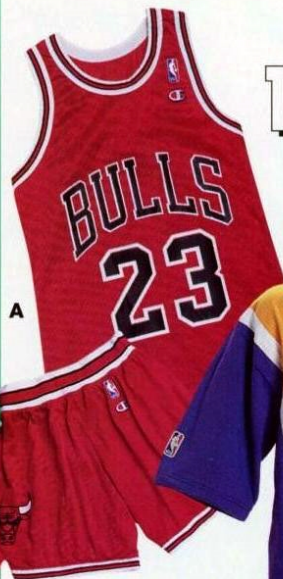
Allen Barra and Rob Neyer are frequent contributors to this magazine.



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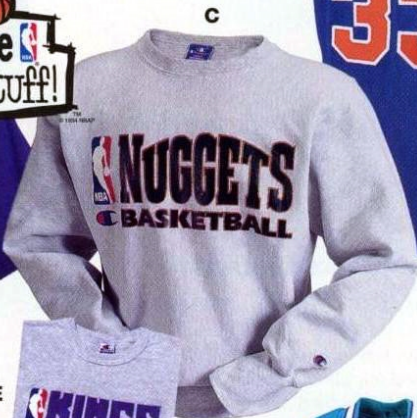
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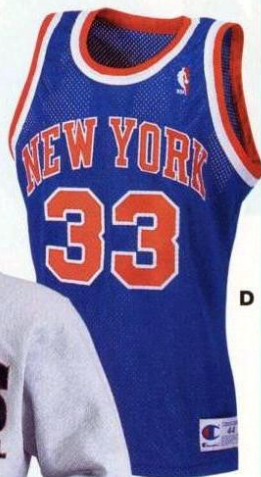
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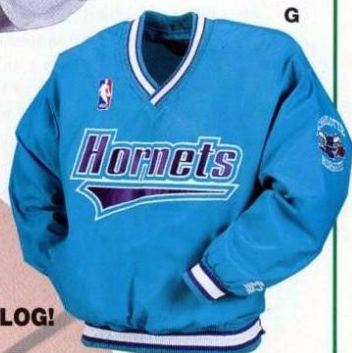
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Child - \$94.99; Adult - \$119.99 - 129.99 #KXXX
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rough



Who says Danny Fortson's the toughest player on the court? He does. By Will Blythe

Photo by Jake Chessum

LIKE MOST GREAT POWER FORWARDS, Cincinnati's Danny Fortson has always had the ability to get his shots off in heavy traffic. Just ask William Jefferson Clinton, famous for a few phat moves of his own.

After Cincinnati fried Arkansas 82-67 last season in Fayetteville, the president visited the Bearcats' locker room and decided to offer Fortson a little free coaching. (Presidents like to do this sort of thing.)

"Danny," the Razorback-in-Chief said, "you need to get to work on that free-throw shooting."

Ouch!

Now it's true that Fortson had just missed 10 of 18 from the line. Still, you wouldn't catch him telling the president how to fix the deficit. He waited a polite beat, then, with the locker room quiet, everyone eavesdropping, Fortson nodded, smiled, and said: "Sure has been nice talking to you, Bill."

Not disrespecting the Man, he wants you to know. More like rubbing off the president on a verbal pick. Fortson grinned slyly while his teammates erupted into laughter. Clinton turned back to look at him, a slightly pained smile stretched across his face.

One way or another, Danny Fortson always finds a way to score, always gets the last word, even if it's a shot off the rebound. He's a sweet, boyish guy, but he wants to win every little moment.

"I'm a sore loser," he says.

Like this Friday afternoon, for instance, at the Cincinnati basketball office when associate head coach Larry Harrison passes through saying, "I'm going to go get a haircut." He gives Fortson and teammate Damon Flint a hard look: "Come on, fellas. Let's go get a haircut."

Fortson rubs his enormous hands over his nearly clean-shaven pate. "I just got a haircut," he says. "But you might as well get that wig of yours cut."

The last word. He and Flint catch each other's eyes, smirking.

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a man's face, focusing on his right eye and ear. The skin is dark and textured, with warm, golden-brown lighting. The word "cut" is printed in a large, white, sans-serif font across the bottom of the image.

cut

Yes, something tells me we're not in Kansas anymore, or Duke, or North Carolina, or Indiana, or any of those posh, well-behaved programs where a wisecrack can leave you running suicide drills at dawn. Or worse.

At those schools, when a fight breaks out at practice, the coach doesn't pull up a chair, kick back, smile, and watch the action as if he had a ring-side seat at the Golden Gloves. But that's what Cincinnati head coach Bob Huggins does, according to Fortson, his star protégé and psychological double.

"Hugs likes to test our manhood," says Fortson, who enters his junior season on a collision course with the NBA (and whatever else might dare step in his 6'7", 260-pound way). "He doesn't mind when we fight," Fortson adds. "I think he even enjoys it."

Of course, Huggins is the sort of coach who applauds aggression the way Mother Teresa appreciates tender mercies toward the poor and dying. "To get you going, he calls you coward and little girl and a lot of young-man things that I can't repeat," Fortson says.

To demonstrate how he wants his players to take charges, Huggins goads them into running into him at full speed. Inevitably, one little girl decides to take him up on his kind offer—and blasts the coach to the floor like a bowling pin.

While Huggins and Fortson may share the same mania for total victory, they certainly don't possess similar builds. It's damned near impossible to knock Fortson down, no matter how hard you run at him: "Ain't nobody gonna move me."

On his way to All-America honors last season, as well as Conference USA player of the year, Fortson averaged 20.1 points and 9.6 rebounds. He's got a sweet turnaround jumper and a solid jump hook, but his is an old-fashioned, largely Earth-bound game. Many of his shots come with three men hanging on

him as he bashes his way to the rack.

Fortson "doesn't look pretty getting the job done," says Wayne Embry, president and GM of the Cleveland Cavaliers, "but he gets the job done."

As Fortson says, if he can't shoot over you, he'll go around you. If he can't outjump you (and his vertical leap is a modest 29 inches, up five inches from when he arrived at school in 1994), he'll bang you to death. And if he can't outmuscle you...

Actually, with less than 8 percent body fat, and the ability to bench press of 330 pounds, that's not a problem. He even lifts weights specially designed to increase his finger strength. His burly assertion of territorial privileges around the basket is not to be taken lightly. "I'm famous for knocking people's teeth out," he confesses, a tad sheepishly, as Damon Flint snickers.

Drew Barry could tell you all about it—that is, if his mouth didn't hurt so much. Fortson once left a few of the former Georgia Tech guard's teeth on the hardwood at the U.S. Olympic Festival.

"They put a bad name out on me for that," he says. "I didn't mean to do it. When you're big and strong, people always think that you're trying to bully someone."

Take referees, for example. It is they, not the opposing players, who have enjoyed the greatest success in dislodging him from inside position. Last season, Fortson enjoyed the dubious honor of leading Cincinnati with 118 fouls, an average of 3.6 a game. As a result, he usually played only about 27 minutes a night.

"He doesn't get calls," says St. Louis coach Charlie Spoonhour, "because he's so much stronger than everyone else. I'm sure I can do a chin-up on his arm, and it wouldn't affect his shooting."

"Please," Fortson begs all of you refs out there, "let all those sissy things go

and let men play the game like men."

Fortson was already playing like a man when he arrived at Cincinnati two years ago, despite being laid low by a pre-season bout of pneumonia that had him trudging around campus with an IV hanging from his arm. ("Hugs thought I was just lallygagging at first.")

He grew up poor in what he calls the "rehab town" of Altoona, Pa., a hard-bitten city of abandoned steel mills, where his father, he says, was a "drug addict and an alcoholic." ("He's better now," Fortson says. "I'm happy for him.")

When Fortson and his mother moved to Pittsburgh at the outset of his junior year in high school, in part to escape his father's abuse, the state athletic association banned him from playing for his new school for a year, a decision that still rankles. "It seemed like they were trying to persecute me," he says. "Millions of times people said something bad about me. I use that as motivation."

Indeed, as much as they pain him, he seems to cherish insults, doubts. Resentment is a renewable fuel. Mention a supposed weakness and Fortson furrows his brow. His skin, it appears, is the only thin thing on him.

"What do the NBA scouts say about me?" he asks, a childish vulnerability clouding his features. Some say that he'll be a lottery pick, others that he isn't tall enough to play power forward at the next level, that he soldiers so much inside at Cincinnati that he hasn't developed his dribble or an outside shot.

For an instant, Fortson looks like he's been kicked. "I've got the broader game," he protests. "You may or may not see it here, you know what I mean?"

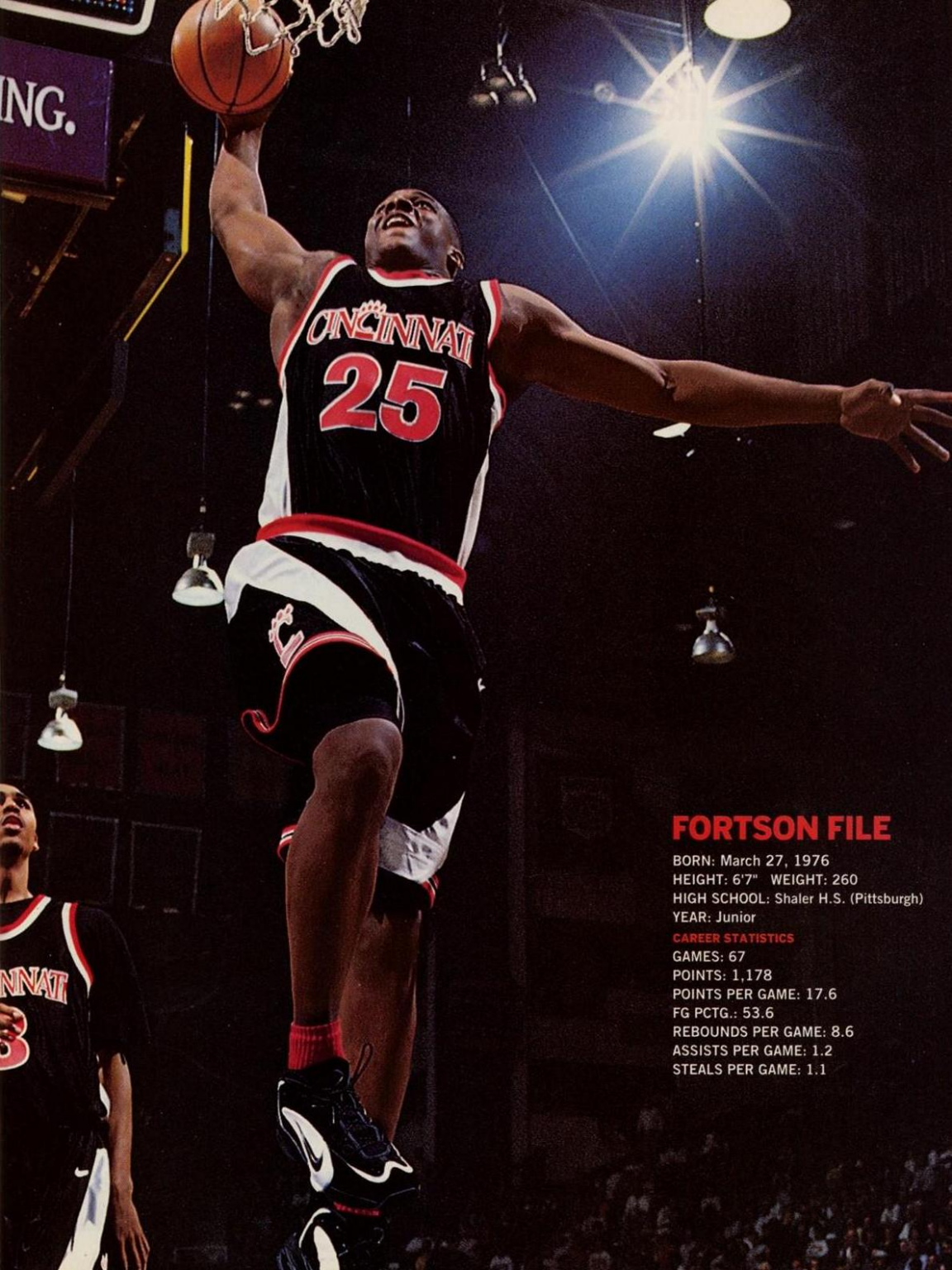
He winks, working to recover his cool.

"I do what coach Huggins wants me to do and he wants me inside here. But I can dribble, I can shoot the three. When the season comes, see what happens. They'll be sorry in the NBA if they don't pick me up."

At this moment, student coach Terry Nelson, a droll veteran of the 1992 Final Four team, wanders by. "You're one big dude," he says to Fortson. "Karl Malone can't hold your jock strap."

Fortson just laughs. For once, he has nothing to say. Of course, why object to a notion that you want more than anything else to agree with? At moments like this, there's no need for the last word. ☼

**If he can't
shoot
over you,
he'll go
around
you. If
he can't
outjump
you he'll
bang you
to death.
And if
he can't
outmuscle
you...
well, that's
not a
problem.**



ING.

CINNATI
3

FORTSON FILE

BORN: March 27, 1976
HEIGHT: 6'7" WEIGHT: 260
HIGH SCHOOL: Shaler H.S. (Pittsburgh)
YEAR: Junior

CAREER STATISTICS

GAMES: 67
POINTS: 1,178
POINTS PER GAME: 17.6
FG PCTG.: 53.6
REBOUNDS PER GAME: 8.6
ASSISTS PER GAME: 1.2
STEALS PER GAME: 1.1

You don't like Kobe Bryant skipping college? You like the idea of slavery?

THE WORLD'S SIX greatest mysteries:

- 1) How did life begin?
- 2) How do Tony Danza and Sherman Hemsley keep getting sitcoms?
- 3) Why do hot dogs come 10 to a pack while buns come in packs of eight?
- 4) What could any movie director who hires Dan Akroyd possibly be thinking?
- 5) If a dozen urinals are open, why does that guy have to use the one next to mine?
- 6) Why is there so much outrage about teenagers leaving school early to play in the NBA?

No. 1 is too complicated, but the answer to 2-6 is basically, "Because people are complete idiots." Since this magazine is about sports, not urinals, we'll focus on answering mystery No. 6.

We must begin with the understanding that college basketball is a sham. The conferences get the TV money, the athletic departments get the ticket revenue, and the coaches get the deodorant commercials. The players? They get nothing. Actually, that's wrong. They get something. They get screwed.

A free education? Please. There's nothing free about it. If you live in-state, an athletic scholarship to, say, the University of Florida is worth about \$6,000 a year. Tally up the time an athlete devotes to his sport—practicing, playing, lifting, studying film—and his hourly wage would be larger if he wore one of those stupid paper crowns and stood behind a Burger King counter. The tuba player gets a free ride, and he doesn't risk tearing his anterior cruciate ligament. The chemistry whiz gets a full scholarship, but 60,000 fans have never filed into an arena to watch him play with his beaker.

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for getting a decent education. If everyone had one, I wouldn't have to waste time making arguments like this one.

Here's my advice to any high school basketballer pegged for first-round selection: don't go anywhere near a college classroom, kid. That would make you

just like the projected first-rounders who *are* enrolled.

I know it sounds blasphemous, but college athletes should grab all the money they can—from boosters, from agents, from anyone offering. The prehistoric, tyrannical NCAA won't let these kids get paid for their real jobs, so the kids should at least use the sucker system as much as it uses them.

Look at poor Chris Webber (poor being a relative term here). Webber left Michigan early after a fast-food embarrassment.

He ordered two fish sandwiches but had to send one back after sifting through the change in his pocket and finding he didn't have enough for both. Walking home hungry, Webber noticed something in the school bookstore window—a replica of his jersey selling for nearly \$100.

If the NCAA were a person, its occupation would be either "slave owner" or "pimp." Webber never saw any of the money Michigan made off his name, of course. You don't have to be studying Accounting 101 to see the unfairness in that, don't have to walk across graduation stage to understand that a diploma isn't worth nearly as much as an NBA contract.

So applaud Kevin Garnett and Kobe Bryant for skipping college, applaud Allen Iverson and Stephon Marbury for leaving early. You say they're selling their childhoods? I say your mourning is misplaced. Where's the outrage when a 17-year-old

outfielder goes into the minors *without* the millions? Why no sorrow for Kerri Strug, whose life ceased being normal the moment she climbed atop a balance beam before her 10th birthday?

The point of college, essentially, is to increase your earning power. Do you think the dork with the 1,560 SAT wouldn't skip college if a computer firm offered him \$8 million out of high school?

Kobe Bryant, for one, plays the piano and speaks Italian fluently. He doesn't need

college, doesn't need a calculus textbook to understand this formula:

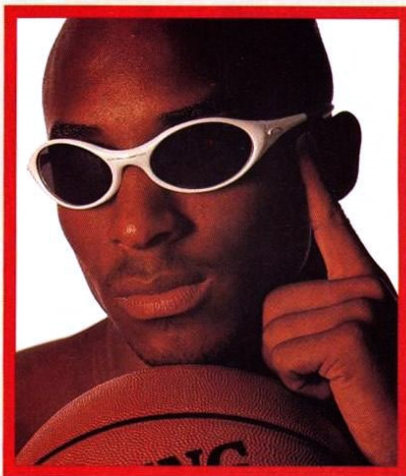
Playing For Millions + Playing With Shaq > Playing For Free + Sharing A Shaq With Three Dorm Mates.

Athletes should go to college to learn? Fine. But when did they start doing that, exactly? Was it before Dexter Manley left Oklahoma State unable to read? Or after Deion Sanders skipped all his exams his senior year at Florida State?

You say Bryant is too impressionable to enter a world devoid of good role models? I say he's in trouble if he's looking for his role models anywhere beyond his dinner table. Besides, the kind of player the NBA can corrupt will be corrupted as much at 23 as he would be at 18.

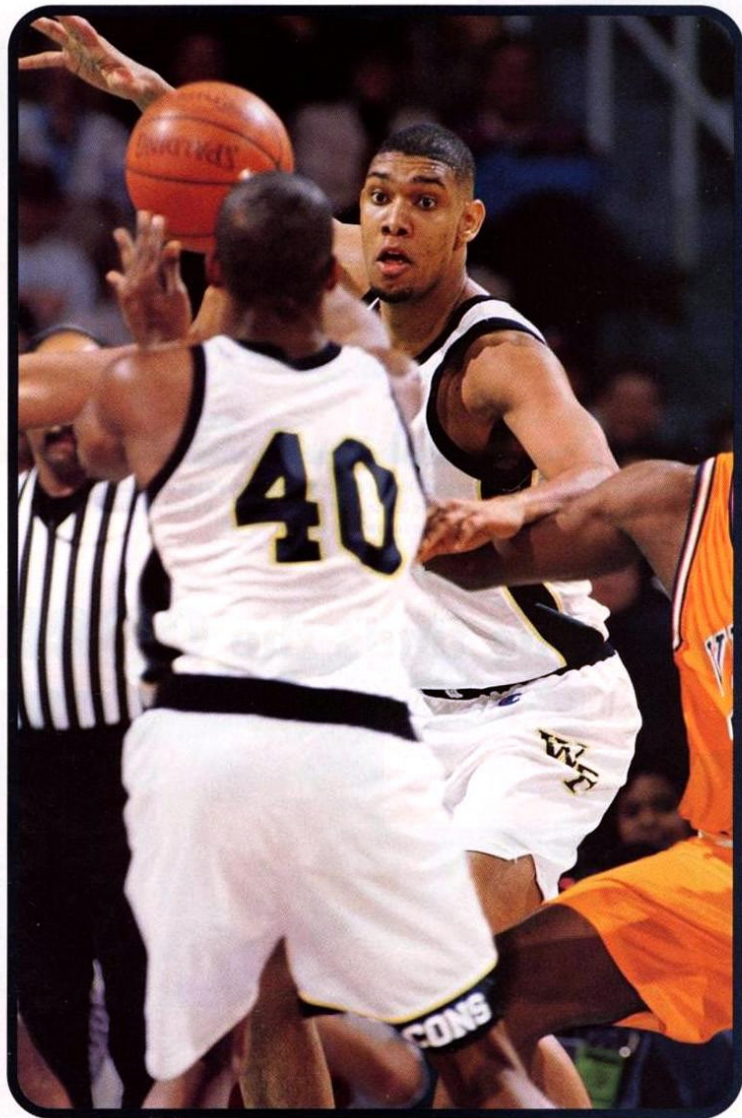
I need but five words to rest my case: Derrick Coleman stayed four years.

University of Miami grad Dan Le Batard is a columnist for The Miami Herald and a regular contributor to this magazine.



BREAKDOWN:

mr. inside out



TIM DUNCAN BEATS YOU FROM ANYWHERE—AND FORGET DOUBLE-TEAMING HIM. BY ROGER JACKSON

As he prepared his team to face Wake Forest in the ACC Tournament championship game, Georgia Tech coach Bobby Cremins faced a dilemma: how do you stop Wake Forest's Tim Duncan, the best big man in college basketball?

Cremins had two choices: collapse on Duncan and make Wake beat Tech from outside, or play Duncan straight-up and take his chances.

Cremins chose Option No. 2, handing 6'9" Eddie Elisma the task of containing Wake's big man. The result: Duncan's 27-point, 22-rebound, four-block gem as the Deacons won, 75-74.

Duncan dropped his entire offensive arsenal on Elisma. The baby hook when Elisma played him too close. A nifty step-back jumper from the top of the key when Elisma played him too loose. A thunder dunk when Elisma failed to protect the baseline.

But it was Duncan's six assists against Tech that illustrate why he's so difficult to defend. When Tech gave Elisma help, Duncan found the open man. And that man usually knew what to do with the ball—the Deacons shot 42 percent from the three-point arc last season, including 51 percent from forward Ricky Peral.

"We run our offense as much through Tim as we do through the point guard," Wake coach Dave Odom says. "We want him to be part of the offense as a decisionmaker."

Duncan is already an anomaly—a college big man with polished low-post skills. But inside Duncan's 6'11", 248-pound frame are the tools of a small forward. Duncan handles the ball well enough to lead the break—he ranked second on Wake in assists (2.91) last season while shooting 55.5 percent from the floor. And let's not overlook his 19.1 points and 12.3 rebounds a game.

"Tim's not just a post player," Wake assistant coach Ernie Nestor says. "He's a basketball player who happens to be 6'11". He's our best low-post player and best high-post player."

Heck, he's just the nation's best college player. Period.

Give Duncan a **step** and count the two...



1 Wake coach Dave Odom runs much of his offense through center Tim Duncan—and with good reason. Duncan has the quickness to beat his man one-on-one and the passing skills to exploit the double-team. Here, Georgia Tech's Eddie Elisma draws Duncan in single coverage (circle).



2 Wake guard Ricky Peral beats Tech's Drew Barry off the dribble (right circle) while Duncan (left circle) uses his size and quickness to toss Elisma aside (arrow) and calls for the ball.

...take it away and he finds the **open**



1 Peral, this time against Clemson, looks to get the offense started in the high post with a pass to Duncan (circle) while teammates (left to right) Tony Rutland, Steven Goolsby, and Jerry Braswell fan out on the sideline away from the ball.



2 As Peral makes his cut through the lane, Duncan (circle) turns to make a move. Braswell (25) heads to the top of the key. Goolsby (5) holds his position. Rutland (30) drifts to the right corner.



3 Duncan is a patient player who rarely forces a shot or a pass. As Clemson's defense begins to collapse on him (circle), he waits for his teammates to work free for open shots.



3 Duncan (circle) gets the entry pass from Peral and rolls to the hoop. Tech's Michael Maddox (arrow) leaves his man and slides across the lane to stop Duncan.



4 Maddox arrives too late to stop Duncan's drive. Instead, he fouls Duncan as the Wake Forest big man scores, giving him a chance at a three-point play.

man.



4 Goolsby (5) is open on the wing, but Clemson's Greg Buckner (circle) is in position to rotate out to cover him. Duncan instead whips a pass to Rutland (30, in previous frame at left), who is all alone in the right corner.



5 With nobody within 15 feet of him, Rutland goes up for a three-pointer that drops cleanly though the hoop. That's the chance you take when you overplay the big guy.

Mount Coachmore

Coaches by breed are legends in their own minds. But how do they stack up when seen through the eyes of history? Here's our take.

Illustration by Owen Phillips

THE SUMMIT
Pat Summitt

MOUNTAIN GOAT
Jim Boeheim

VOLCANOES

Bobby Knight
Bob Huggins
John Chaney
Rick Barnes

TRAILBLAZERS

Jerry Tarkanian
Don Haskins
Rick Majerus
Nolan Richardson

CAVE DWELLER
Norm Stewart

CAVE DWELLER'S PAL
Dale Brown

FLASHFIRES

Steve Fisher
Jim Harrick
Richard Williams
James "Bruiser" Flint

ON THE ROCKS

Gary Williams
Larry Finch
Pat Kennedy
Bob Wenzel



SHOOTING STARS

Todd Bozeman
Jeff Jones
Rollie Massimino
Tony Barone



RIISING STARS

Tubby Smith
Tim Floyd
Mike Montgomery
James Dickey

ACROPHOBE

Steve Lappas

EVEREST

John Wooden

KINGS OF THE MOUNTAIN

Dean Smith
Coach K
Rick Pitino
John Thompson

CHIPS OFF THE OLD BLOCK

Ralph Willard
Eddie Fogler
Bob Bender
Herb Sendek

ROCK SOLID

Dave Odom
Lute Olson
Roy Williams
Jim Calhoun

MOLEHILLS

John McLeod
Paul Westhead
Lefty Driesell
Randy Ayers

MOUNTAIN DO'S

Billy Tubbs
Gene Keady
Denny Crum
Tom Penders

Lesson learned, UMass? Never build upon a **cult** personality.

WHEN JOHN CALIPARI CAME to UMass in 1988, the phones in the basketball office were rotary dial, a real-life metaphor for a backwater program that hadn't had a winning season in 10 years. When Calipari bolted for the Nets at \$3 million per, he left behind a brand-new building and the winningest program over the last three years.

Build a program? Calipari *was* the program. Prep stars didn't pick UMass because they loved the geology department. They went because they were

work, some baggage is better left behind.

It's naive to think otherwise. Check your moral outrage at the door. Sit back. Enjoy the show. Rarely are things as they appear.

No one understands the value of appearances better than Calipari. He made more than \$1 million a year at UMass and last season donated \$20,000 to the library. He wore coat and tie when the Minutemen played on ESPN, turtle-neck and slacks when they played on *espn2*. And Calipari, unlike so many supersalesmen, is also a great bench coach. He made UMass' name by scheduling national powers, then beating them.

With Calipari and Camby gone, the NCAA is unlikely to penalize the Minutemen. For UMass, the biggest penalty is losing the game's hottest wheeler-dealer. If UMass were a stock, Wall Street smarties would be screaming "sell." Once Calipari's replacement, former assistant James "Bruiser" Flint, finds himself trying to persuade prep studs to hide

be the same seductive dynamo as Calipari is like asking Bush to be Reagan.

Not that he won't have plenty of support. UMass is no longer UWhat? The administration, well aware that applications and alumni donations are way up largely due to the team's high profile, aims to keep it that way. Although embarrassed by a *Boston Globe* story two years ago that revealed seven of Calipari's players—including four starters—had maintained eligibility despite having less than a C average, UMass still welcomes all jump shooters.

Admissions director Arlene Cash says she has never rejected an applicant the basketball program wanted. ACC and Big East coaches would kill for license like that.

"The table is set for me," Flint says. "Administrations make programs. Our administration is very supportive of me. If the administration takes a step back, I'll be in trouble.

"But I don't think they'll do that."

Flint's style is less combative than the brash, high-strung Calipari's is. And he doesn't have his mentor's commercial bent—Calipari copyrighted UMass' "Refuse To Lose" slogan and makes an estimated \$50,000 a month off its use. "John always knew the right thing to say at the right time," Flint says.

The new coach, whose father's influential presence on the Philadelphia summer league scene helped land Ketner and Weeks, hasn't mastered anything yet. But Calipari blessed his hiring, telling recruits that if he left, Flint would be the guy.

A less irritating guy, he might have added. Flint won't get into a feud with John Chaney that'll make the Temple coach threaten to kill him. He won't strip off his clothes to draw a T and fire up his team, as Calipari did against GW.

And he won't keep UMass on top for long. Unless he masters Calipari philosophy: don't ask, don't tell.

Alan Greenberg is a feature writer for The Hartford Courant.



seduced by the man. Sell UMass? Calipari could sell Armani to the Amish. He turned academic deadheads into dean's list laureates faster than you can say stacked deck. He recruited seven players from the same Connecticut AAU team in two years, then abruptly chilled his relationship with its coach as cries and whispers trailed the Minutemen's launch into top-20 orbit.

He blew town just as Marcus Camby, his junior superstar, was entering the NBA draft and admitting he'd accepted jewelry and money from agents, and just as the NCAA was finding out that UMass, a Final Four team, had given complimentary tickets to agents. The son of a former USAir baggage handler at the Pittsburgh airport, Calipari understood that in his line of

out in a second-rate conference like the Atlantic 10 at a cow college like UMass, the Minutemen will plunge off the national radar screen.

But not immediately. Thanks to Calipari, Flint welcomes UMass' deepest recruiting class, plus Camby replacement Lari Ketner (a Prop 48 last year) and veteran enforcer Tyrone Weeks. Carmelo Travieso and Edgar Padilla are college basketball's best backcourt.

"I'm probably more afraid of the following year than I am this year," says Flint, 31. "Next year, I lose those guys. Then who do I get to lead the team?"

Good question. Flint, who stayed home in Philadelphia to star at St. Joseph's, has never been a head coach. Asking him to

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- J. Taylor, Rockford, MI

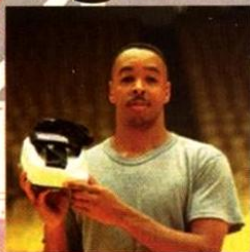
"In only 4 weeks I gained 7 inches!"
- M. King, Miami, FL

"With your Jumpsoles my friend is
now dunking over me. Help!"
- G. Blackwell, San Antonio, TX

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- A. Alm, Sweden

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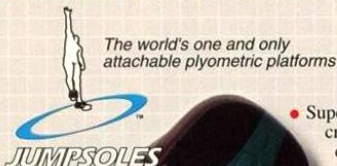
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By Bill Reynolds

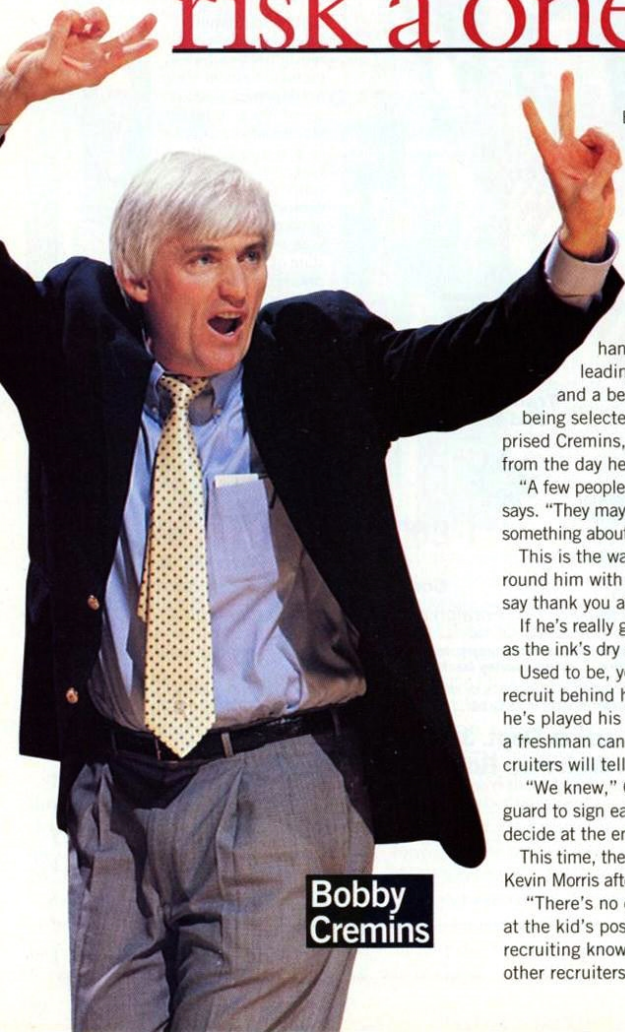
The new rec

For a hint of the upheaval sweeping college basketball, just take a look at last June's NBA draft.

The game said goodbye to juniors Marcus Camby and Ray Allen, sophomore Allen Iverson, and freshmen Stephon Marbury and Shareef Abdur-Rahim. We didn't get a chance to say hello to Kobe Bryant and Jermaine O'Neal, two high school kids who went straight to the NBA. And if you're looking forward to watching this year's top recruit—Villanova's Tim Thomas—don't blink. This time next year, he'll be in the NBA.

What to do? For coaches who live out of suitcases, chasing studs from concrete to hardwood, the game is a lot tougher. Either alter your recruiting plan or fall by the wayside. Here's how four of them have readjusted.

risk a one-shot



Bobby Cremins

BOBBY CREMINS UNDERSTOOD

what he was getting when he recruited Stephon Marbury out of Brooklyn's Coney Island—a potential superstar, the kind of player who makes or breaks a program. He also knew the point guard was intent on using Tech as a one-year launching pad to the NBA.

Call it a college hoops version of one hand washing the other. Marbury did his part, leading Tech to its first regular-season ACC title and a berth in the Sweet 16. Then he departed after being selected fourth in the draft. Neither result surprised Cremins, who had been plotting how to replace Marbury almost from the day he accepted Cremins' scholarship offer.

"A few people said we were using Stephon and he was using us," Cremins says. "They may be right to some degree. But do something about it. Do something about the system."

This is the way the system works: sign your high school superstar, surround him with a good supporting cast, ride him for all he's worth, then say thank you at the end of the first season—the second if you're lucky.

If he's really good, you need to start looking for his replacement as soon as the ink's dry on his letter of intent—and that raises a new dilemma.

Used to be, you promised the top guy you were after that you wouldn't recruit behind him for at least two years. Now you begin recruiting before he's played his first game. But since there's no guarantee of a vacancy—a freshman can fail to meet expectations or suffer an injury, other recruiters will tell him—bringing in that next superstar becomes harder.

"We knew," Cremins says, "that we had two chances of getting another guard to sign early—slim and none. So we told kids that Stephon would decide at the end of the season, and there'd still be time to sign late."

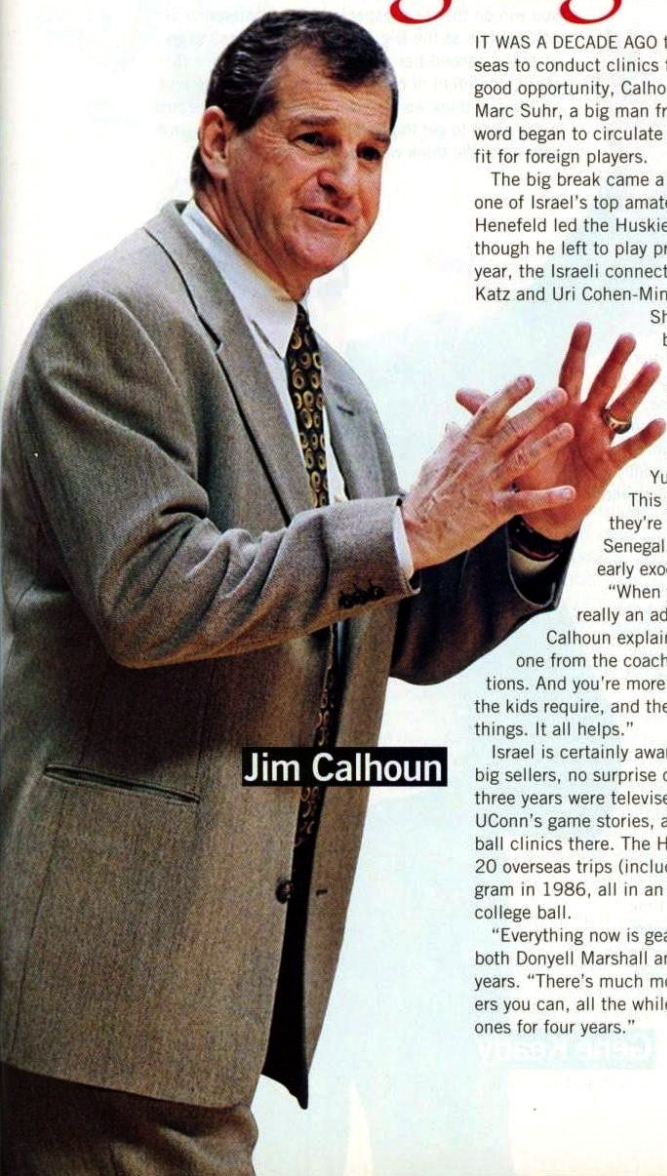
This time, the strategy worked. Cremins inked gifted New York point guard Kevin Morris after Marbury entered the draft. Next time, he's not so sure.

"There's no question that it's more difficult if you have a great player at the kid's position," Cremins says. "And believe me, every kid you're recruiting knows who else is in your program. And if they don't, the other recruiters tell them."



Stephon Marbury

recruiting game go global



Jim Calhoun

IT WAS A DECADE AGO that UConn coach Jim Calhoun first went overseas to conduct clinics for USA Basketball. Never one to pass on a good opportunity, Calhoun made a few contacts and came away with Marc Suhr, a big man from West Germany. Suhr played sparingly, but word began to circulate that the bucolic campus in Storrs was a good fit for foreign players.

The big break came a couple of years later when Nadav Henefeld, one of Israel's top amateurs, was looking for a place to play. The 6'7" Henefeld led the Huskies to their breakthrough 1989-90 season, and though he left to play professional ball in his homeland the following year, the Israeli connection took hold. Calhoun brought in Ghilad Katz and Uri Cohen-Mintz as reserves, then landed Doron

Sheffer, who anchored the Connecticut backcourt the last three years.

Today, foreign players are fixtures on the UConn roster. Connecticut has had four Israelis, a West German, a Greek, and a

Yugoslavian on its roster in recent years.

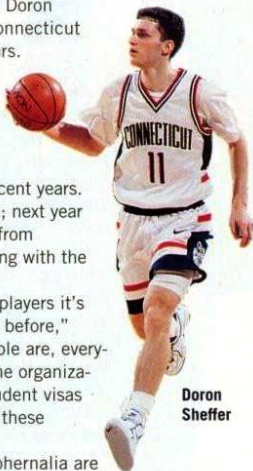
This year they'll have a Ukrainian; next year they're hoping to have two players from Senegal. It's Calhoun's way of dealing with the early exodus of players.

"When you're dealing with foreign players it's really an advantage that you've done it before,"

Calhoun explains. "You know who the people are, everyone from the coaches to the people who run the organizations. And you're more aware of things like the student visas the kids require, and the kids know you're aware of these things. It all helps."

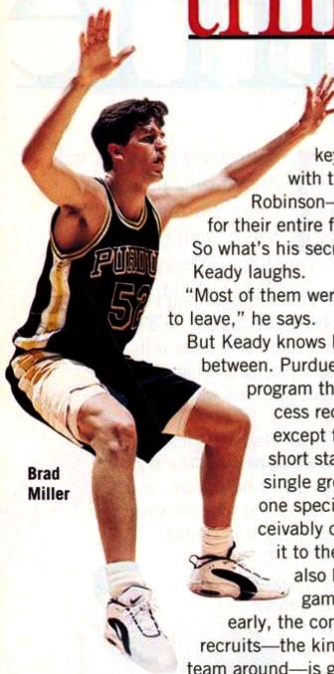
Israel is certainly aware of UConn. Huskies paraphernalia are big sellers, no surprise considering that 15 UConn games over the past three years were televised in Israel, most major newspapers carried UConn's game stories, and Calhoun has become a favorite at basketball clinics there. The Huskies' coach figures he's made more than 20 overseas trips (including nine to Israel) since taking over the program in 1986, all in an effort to keep pace with the rapid turnover in college ball.

"Everything now is geared to this year," says Calhoun, who has seen both Donyell Marshall and Ray Allen leave UConn early in the past three years. "There's much more emphasis now on trying to get the best players you can, all the while knowing you probably won't have the great ones for four years."



Doron Sheffer

think second tier



Brad Miller

GENE KEADY'S PURDUE

Boilermakers have won three Big Ten titles in a row. The key? All of Keady's best players—with the notable exception of Glenn Robinson—have remained in his program for their entire four years of eligibility.

So what's his secret?

Keady laughs.

"Most of them weren't good enough to leave," he says.

But Keady knows he's betwixt and between. Purdue is an excellent program that's had great success recently, but—except for the Big Dog's short stay—it's lacked the single great player, that one special kid who conceivably could have taken

it to the Final Four. And he also knows that with the game's top players leaving

early, the competition for "second-tier" recruits—the kind Keady has always built his team around—is getting far more intense.

"Everyone has to go all over the country now," Keady says. "Indiana kids used to stay home. That's all done now. The Big East changed all that. They started going out recruiting everywhere, and now everyone is doing it."

The NCAA has put up some roadblocks for the underdogs, says Keady. There are restrictions on how much time coaches can be out on the road evaluating high school talent, which he and many others say favor the larger, better-known schools. Gone are the days when you essentially could out-work people by being on the road longer.

But if he can't be on the road longer, he can make his scope broader.

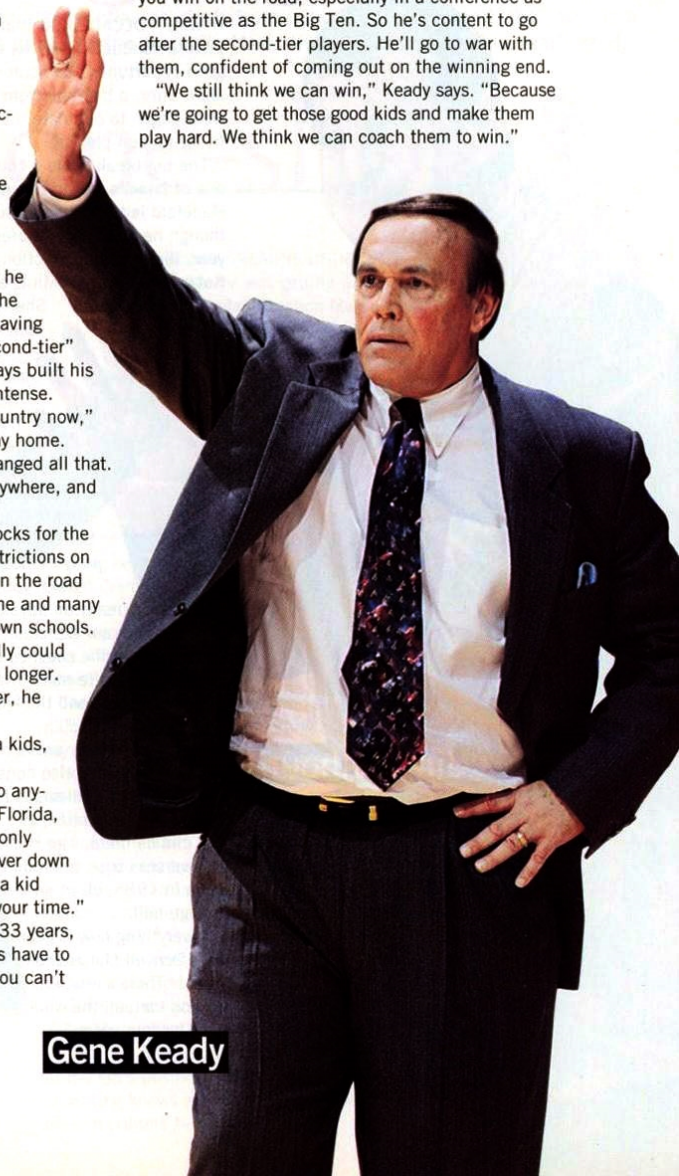
"We used to recruit mostly Indiana kids, then look at Chicago, Illinois, and Michigan," Keady says. "Now we'll go anywhere for a kid we think we can get. Florida, junior colleges, anywhere. About the only place we won't go is over the Ohio River down to Kentucky. If you get involved with a kid Kentucky wants, you're just wasting your time."

Keady, who's been in coaching for 33 years, says one other change is that coaches have to look for maturity as well as talent. "You can't

evaluate kids the way you used to," he says. "We try and recruit character now. Kids who are going to be on time, who understand discipline and structure. Talent is not enough."

Keady's pitch is this: a kid will have a better chance for success in the world outside Purdue if he spends four years inside the program's structure. He knows that veterans like Brad Miller help you win on the road, especially in a conference as competitive as the Big Ten. So he's content to go after the second-tier players. He'll go to war with them, confident of coming out on the winning end.

"We still think we can win," Keady says. "Because we're going to get those good kids and make them play hard. We think we can coach them to win."

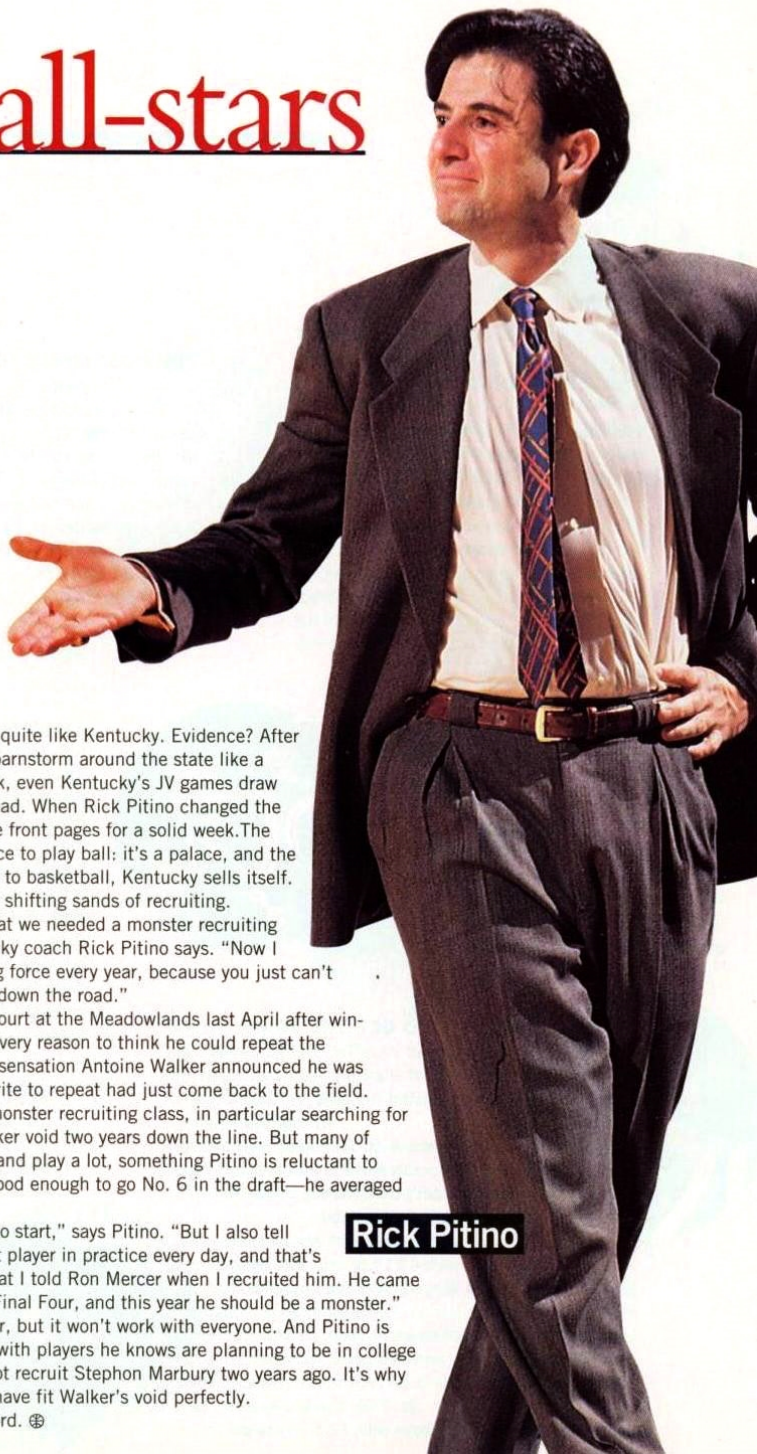


Gene Keady

hoard all-stars



Ron Mercer



THERE'S NO PLACE in college basketball quite like Kentucky. Evidence? After their eligibility runs out, Wildcat seniors barnstorm around the state like a rock band, playing to sellout crowds. Heck, even Kentucky's JV games draw 2,500 people willing to cough up \$8 a head. When Rick Pitino changed the trim on the uniform last February, it made front pages for a solid week. The 23,000-seat Rupp Arena is not just a place to play ball; it's a palace, and the players are treated royally. When it comes to basketball, Kentucky sells itself.

But that doesn't make it immune to the shifting sands of recruiting.

"Before, we operated on the premise that we needed a monster recruiting year one out of every three years," Kentucky coach Rick Pitino says. "Now I think you have to be out there with driving force every year, because you just can't predict what's going to happen two years down the road."

Pitino knows. When he walked off the court at the Meadowlands last April after winning the national championship, he had every reason to think he could repeat the following year. A month later, sophomore sensation Antoine Walker announced he was entering the NBA draft. The odds-on favorite to repeat had just come back to the field.

So Pitino went looking for yet another monster recruiting class, in particular searching for that special player who would fill the Walker void two years down the line. But many of those kids are looking to play right away, and play a lot, something Pitino is reluctant to accommodate. As good as Walker was—good enough to go No. 6 in the draft—he averaged only 27 minutes a game.

"I tell them they're probably not going to start," says Pitino. "But I also tell them that they'll be playing behind a great player in practice every day, and that's only going to make them better. That's what I told Ron Mercer when I recruited him. He came on the latter part of the year, had a great Final Four, and this year he should be a monster."

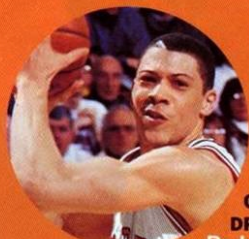
That pitch may have worked with Mercer, but it won't work with everyone. And Pitino is smart enough not to try, drawing the line with players he knows are planning to be in college for only one year. It's the reason he did not recruit Stephon Marbury two years ago. It's why he didn't chase Tim Thomas, who would have fit Walker's void perfectly.

It's also a luxury only Kentucky can afford. ☺

Rick Pitino

guys to

Who says there's no star power?
Only the bozos who aren't paying

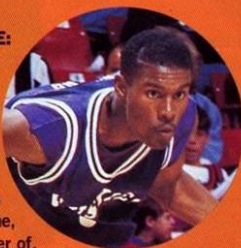


**GUY YOU'RE NOT
GONNA KNOW UNTIL
DRAFT DAY: Anthony
Parker** (Bradley, Sr. SG) Bird.

Hawkins. Seals. Every few years the Missouri Valley slips a can't-miss star into hoops consciousness. This year, the infiltrator's Parker. The 6'5" guard led his team in 11 offensive and defensive categories last year. He has a sweet stroke (41.1 percent from downtown, 19.3 points) and bangs down low (6.3 rebounds) when he has to. Yet, somehow, the looking-to-repeat MVC player of the year is again a secret outside the conference. Again, not for long.

BEST PLAYER TO RETHINK HIS FUTURE:

Mark Sanford (Washington, Jr. PF) When Sanford begged out of the early-entry pool just before the last draft, he cited "some things I need to work on." Emphasis on some—the first-team All-Pac-10 forward averaged 16.5 points, 6.1 boards. Mature? He's overcome his dad's murder and the lure of the Dallas streets. Smoother ball skills, a pumped-up frame, and he's ready for the move he thought better of.



SOPHS WHO GET THE POINT: Forget Manning and Wuerffel. The hardwood has its share of big-time QBs too, many of whom wasted no time making a mark.

Shawnta Rogers (George Washington, So. PG) was A-10 All-Rookie after averaging 10.5 points and 6.5 assists per. He was also the team's third-leading rebounder (4.7).

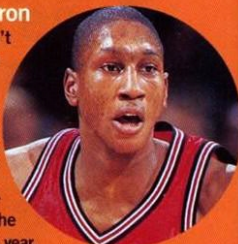
Did we mention he's 5'3"? **Kareem Reid**

(Arkansas, So. PG) moved right into the starting five,

then dished a team-record 219 assists. And he gives you all 40 minutes of hell, logging 324 more minutes than any other Hog. **Terrel McIntyre** (Clemson, So. PG) stepped up when Merl Code went down. Way up. He was the Tigers' co-MVP by year's end, and averaged 15.3 points in the postseason, including 20 in an ACC tourney win vs. UNC. **Lenny Brown** (Xavier, So. PG), the Musketeers' best defender, led conference frosh with 12.5 points per game.

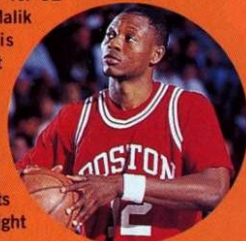
GUY MOST LIKELY TO BREAK OUT: Laron

Profit (Maryland, So. SG/SF) So he didn't enter as high-profile as Stephon Marbury. And he didn't finish his first year with a Joe Smith-like flourish in the NCAAs. In his last 10 games, the spindly 6'6" Profit gave us a hint of what's to come: 9.2 points, 3.2 boards, and 2.4 steals. Better yet, he went for 22 (8 of 9 shooting) vs. FSU in the season finale, then followed with 19 vs. Duke in the first round of the ACC tourney. Those will be every-night stats this year.



BEST PLAYER FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE:

Tunji Awojobi (Boston U., Sr. F) Before last year's North Atlantic Conference title game, Awojobi blasted fellow Nigerian Fela Anikulapo-Kuti on his headphones, then went out and hit 15 of 17 from the floor for 32 points against Drexel's Malik Rose. Awojobi and his mates fell short, but there's hope in Beantown for an NCAA bid this time. Not because Rose is gone to Charlotte, but because the 6'7" Lagos native with the 22.7 points per game last year and eight school records is back.

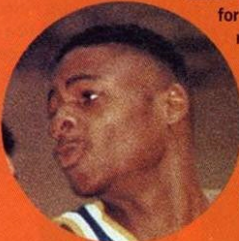


BEST NON-DIVISION I PLAYER: Kebu Stewart

(Cal State-Bakersfield, Sr. F) Okay, it's a bit of a cheat. In a previous life, Stewart spent two years at UNLV, where he averaged 18 points and nearly 11 boards and was Big West player of the year. But when new Rebels

coach Bill Bayno said there was no spot for him in Vegas, it was hello, Road-runners—as in Cal State-Bakersfield.

Stewart quickly made his bones with 19.4 points and just under 11 boards a game, good enough for 1996 Division II All-America honors. Now, he's back for one more year before seeing how his game plays in the big time.

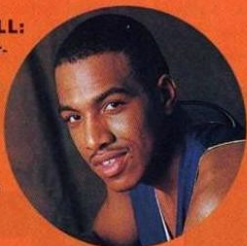


watch

er left in the college game?
g attention. By John Gustafson

FRESHMAN WITH BIGGEST SHOES TO FILL:

Winfred Walton (Syracuse, Fr. PF). In 1987, a former Michigan Mr. Basketball, freshman Derrick Coleman, led the Orange to the national championship game. He wore No. 44. Last season, John Wallace led the Orangemen to the big game as well. The senior star's number? 44. Say hello to freshman power forward Walton, Michigan's Mr. Basketball, 1996 edition. Do we have to tell you what number he'll be wearing?



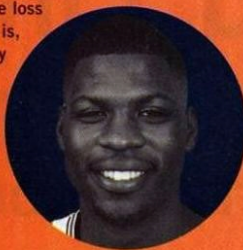
BEST 1-2 PUNCH: Tim Young and Brevin Knight

(Stanford, Jr. C; Sr. PG) The best pivot in the Pac-10. The top healthy point guard in the nation. It's a formidable pair. Sure, the 7'1" Young played in just five games last season (back problems). He'd already proven his worth as a freshman (12.3 ppg). Knight, on the other hand, has been doing it for years. Only the Pac-10? Guess you missed his lighting up UMass for 27 points and nine assists last March.



BEST LATE ENTRANCE: Alex Sanders

(Louisville, So. F) Last time we saw him, Sanders was hitting nearly 20 a game for Oak Hill Academy in Virginia. That was two years ago. Since then, he's barely practiced. A Prop 48 in his freshman year, Sanders spent last season coping with learning disabilities instead of zone defenses. The 6'7", 240-pound forward's better-late-than-never arrival this year coincides nicely with the loss of Samaki Walker. Word is, Sanders has already thrown more passes in practice than Walker did in his entire career.



BEST THOMAS NOT NAMED TIM: Kenny Thomas

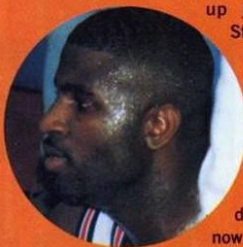
(New Mexico, So. C) Thomas had a tougher time with the NCAA's eligibility police (they took issue with a high school "core" course) than he's had with the on-court stuff. Last year, he was one of only five frosh ever to be All-WAC and one of two new guys to average at least 14 points and seven boards (with UNC's Antawn Jamison).



BEST JC TRANSFER: Horatio Webster

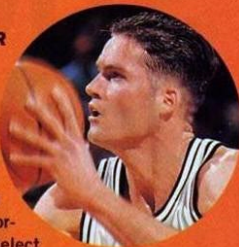
(Miss. St., Jr. PF) According to Connors State College (Warner, Okla.) coach Bill Muse, Marcus Camby was only the second-best player in college last year. The real No. 1 was NJCAA first-team All-American Webster. He averaged 24.4 points (shooting nearly 60 percent from the floor) and 10.1 rebounds for Connors. Growing

up just 45 miles from Starkville, the thick, 6'7" forward may have had several reasons to finish out his college career at Mississippi State. But Webster knows the one reason the Bulldogs made sure he did: "They need a scorer now since Dontae' is gone."



BEST SENIOR YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF: Austin Croshere

(Providence, Sr. F) It was the third minute of the Dream Team's pre-Olympic cakewalk when Shaquille O'Neal wheeled to the hole looking to launch a soft hook through the hoop. But like that, his shot was in the crowd, courtesy of a thin 6'9" forward on the U.S. 22-and-Under Select Team. Shaq, please meet Austin Croshere. The Providence Friars' leading scorer last season (15.3), Croshere is clearly one of the Big East's best, and he's a first-rounder next June. Hey, he's already got Shaq's attention. It's time you gave him a look too.



Push cam

Fired

**for reasons
she still can't
understand, Lin Dunn
can't find work in a profession
in which she's been nothing but a winner.**

By Sheryl Fragin

e to shove

THESE DAYS, THERE'S NOT MUCH ELSE for Lin Dunn to do except torment herself over what went wrong and collect evidence for her lawsuit.

In nine splendid seasons at Purdue, Dunn coached the women's basketball team to seven NCAA Tournaments, including a trip to the Final Four, boosted game attendance by 1,200 percent, and was twice named Big Ten coach of the year. She had an easy rapport with her players, who graduated at a rate far above the NCAA average, and was honored in two gushy resolutions by the Indiana state assembly.

So when she and an assistant were let go last March, in the midst of contract negotiations, her supporters were clueless.

"She's just the most amazing person you'll ever meet," says former center Michele VanGorp, one of four varsity players who transferred immediately after. "She cares about her players on and off court. She cares about their education."

All Purdue officials would say was that they wanted to go "in a different direction," which, considering her success with the team, is the kind of vague sportspeak that implies a hidden explanation. To fill the void, rumors materialized all over West Lafayette about lesbian orgies, domestic violence, 911 calls. They spread so fast and so far that they overshadowed a 26-year career of winning records at four schools and with the 1992 Olympic team. None was substantiated, but as of September, the 49-year old Dunn had been turned down by Arizona State, Cal-Berkeley, Michigan, Washington, and all eight teams of the new ABL—sometimes explicitly because the gossip made her too "risky."

Not all the speculation was so wild. The Lafayette *Journal and Courier* alluded to past NCAA violations and an "omi-

nous" stream of coach defections. Heading the list was Dunn's top assistant, Lamar Boutwell, who mysteriously quit in January after just six months on the job.

Trouble is, these allegations and defections look "ominous" only until you dig into them.

The NCAA violations were numerous but secondary, the most serious being long car trips with recruits. At least, Purdue must not have been troubled by them: the school continued renegotiating Dunn's contract long after the investigation had closed.

As for her assistants, all but Boutwell left for better-paying jobs elsewhere—several as head coaches—because their Purdue salaries were well below market. MaChelle Joseph, for example, who was let go along with Dunn, was earning just \$24,000 after three years—\$21,000 less than her counterpart on the men's team and \$18,500 less than a women's second assistant at Iowa.

And Boutwell didn't quit, as Purdue announced, because of philosophical differences with Dunn. He was forced out after skimming reimbursement money from colleagues in

the athletic department. "I was not ready for Purdue professionally or personally," admits Boutwell, who now lives in Louisiana. "That's what I regret most of all—that I took that job and let her down. I love Lin Dunn to death. When I found out she was fired, my heart sank."

Why would Purdue's athletic director, Morgan Burke, make Dunn take the heat for Boutwell? For the same reason he announced her departure from Purdue under the brightest possible spotlight—at a Saturday press conference during the women's NCAA Tournament. For the same reason he didn't let her leave quietly

In nine years at Purdue, Dunn notched a 206-68 record and six Sweet 16 appearances.



LIFE IN EXILE

Marianne Stanley knows what it's like to live in exile. She got firsthand experience in 1994 after she lost her job as coach of the women's basketball team at USC for daring to demand equal pay with men's coach George Raveling.

Despite a 71-46 record with the Trojans, Stanley was dropped in favor of former USC star Cheryl Miller. In the months that followed, Stanley applied for 100 openings. She was granted one interview. To pay her bills, she took a job marketing Stanford hoops from an office overlooking Maples Pavilion.

"I couldn't bring myself to walk in the gym," she recalls. "I was between devastation and total shock. In 17 years, I hadn't coached below Division I—and Division II schools weren't returning my calls. It was educational apartheid."

It took a call from Stanford coach Tara VanDerveer to put her back on the court. She agreed to accept an interim job with the Cardinal while VanDerveer was away coaching the U.S. Olympic team. And that, in turn, led to an offer from Cal, where the women struggled to a 7-20 finish last season.

Now Stanley makes \$110,000—the same base salary as the men's coach. But the pain still lingers.

"I got so low, they had me believing I'd taint anyone around me," she says. "It took Stanford to make me safe again. As a coach, I have to stand for the same principles I teach my kids. Truthfully, I never thought I'd coach again. It's sad to say, but that's how little faith I had in my profession."

And the outside world? Stanley's \$8 million discrimination suit against USC has been dismissed several times, but she's still appealing. Raveling was making \$130,000; USC officials say they offered Stanley \$90,000 for three years—an amount they call comparable based on seniority. Though salary information is now under court seal, Stanley's attorney says the offer actually was for less than half what Raveling made.

"If we had a law passed to ensure the rights of male athletes 20 years ago," she asks, "would we still be fighting to make it a reality? Hell no!"—By Shaun Assael.

and with dignity. Because, by many accounts, Burke cannot abide employees with complaints and problems—especially if they are women.

"I'm going to respect her privacy and not divulge things that I said to her," Burke now says, brushing off the suggestion that his silence has been more damaging. Even in retrospect, he insists that he left her with "maximum opportunity" to find another job and that none of this was personal.

"She had the opportunity that night either to say it was a mutual decision, or that we took unilateral action," Burke says. On her lawyer's advice, Dunn refused to share responsibility and begged him

to let her resign or retire. Burke rejected anything that didn't make clear that Purdue would not renew her contract.

Dunn hadn't ingratiated herself to Burke by repeatedly complaining about her \$66,300 salary, less than half of what men's coach Gene Keady was making. Throughout college basketball, women's coaches average 59 cents for every dollar a men's coach gets. But Dunn was among the lowest-paid women's coaches in the Big Ten, despite a higher winning percentage (.752) than any men's coach in the conference.

She had been vocal about other unpleasant matters as well, such as Purdue's double standard over NCAA violations and the sexual harassment of a player and a coach. "You might say I was rocking the boat a little bit," Dunn acknowledges, "but it was always through channels."

It almost didn't matter what she did, though, because Burke had tagged Dunn as trouble shortly after his arrival 3½ years ago from a corporate career at Inland Steel. Within weeks, he decided that the two of them were "on a collision course," as he wrote on a com-

patibility test that he gave to his coaches. He made three notations on her test—each negative, each focused on her need for control—and disregarded results that called her perceptive, team-oriented, and sensitive to others' needs.

All this seems a tad picky, considering the slack he's cut some of his male coaches. The football coach, Jim Colletto, is still around after posting five

losing seasons. Colletto's program has had its share of bad grades and player arrests, problems virtually absent from Dunn's program. Two years ago, Burke rewarded Colletto with a contract extension through 1997. "The women's basketball

program was held to a higher standard," says Joseph, Dunn's former assistant, "as far as compliance with NCAA rules, as far as pay equity, as far as our conduct and behavior."

The behavior everyone is hinting at—though no Purdue official will say so out loud—is Dunn's alleged lesbianism. Despite all the lurid gossip, none of the area police departments has any record of complaints against Dunn, no record of domestic violence, no record of 911 calls involving her. And no one has ever charged that she pressured players for sex.

But her sexual preference still was an issue: the associate athletic director, Joni Comstock, went so far as to phone realtor Sally Combs to find out if Dunn was moving in with Joseph, according to Combs herself. "I confronted Joni with it," Dunn recalls. "I said 'First of all, I'm buying the house alone. And second, it's none of your business.' That was in February; I was fired in March."

With women's basketball intent on honing a prime-time image, such witch hunts are increasingly common. Recruiters are now tripping over themselves to sell their programs to parents

Dunn was among the Big Ten's lowest-paid women's coaches despite a .752 winning percentage.



"If it takes me to the Supreme Court," says Dunn, "I'm going to pursue this."

as lesbian-free, or to point a finger at competitors. In this climate, there's no surer way to grab control from a strong woman than to raise the lesbian bugaboo. Whether that woman is or isn't a lesbian is beside the point.

"It happens to coaches who are not gay, but who bring Title IX suits against universities," says Pat Griffin, a University of Massachusetts associate professor who studies homophobia in sports. "The lesbian label is a primary tool." Once so labeled, a coach finds it nearly impossible to land another job, particularly at a Division I school.

The attacks have been especially hard on the 26-year-old Joseph, a one-time star guard for Purdue. "This is so insane," she says, strenuously denying any such relationship. "Lin has been my coach, my mentor, my boss. She's almost 25 years older than me."

To the dismay of former teammates, Joseph not only was fired but now is being written out of school history.

publicly humiliate me."

After 50 rejections, Joseph finally found a job at Auburn in September—but as an administrative assistant. She won't set foot on the basketball court.

Joseph and Boutwell are classic examples of unequal treatment, and they have plenty of company. Jerry Tarkanian is being hailed as a hero at Fresno State despite a long history of dancing around the rules. By contrast, Marianne Stanley, who brought USC's program from nowhere to the Elite Eight in three seasons, found herself out of work and unemployable in 1993 when she fought for pay parity

The life-size picture of her that hung with Purdue's other All-Americans has been replaced, and her Varsity Walk picture—awarded to her as Purdue's best athlete in 1992—disappeared for a while as well.

"Lamar Boutwell made a mistake; he was allowed to resign," Joseph says, pointing to the consideration given to her male colleague who was caught skimming money. "He got another job within three months at St. John's. Here I am, having given seven years to Purdue, and they

with the men's coach.

Ironically, it is precisely because Dunn and Joseph are being treated so badly that people are willing to believe there's more to this story. But Purdue's athletic director has a history of angry responses that are out of proportion to the perceived crime, particularly when a female is involved, according to at least two other coaches and some of the players' parents. As Burke's half of the compatibility test revealed, he "needs to be seen as vigorous and commanding" and "to feel that his decision power is not reduced." That's not easy to accomplish when pushy women don't play along.

Burke lost his cool, for example, with teenage recruits Katie Coleman and Andrea Honeycutt, who sought releases from Purdue when Dunn was fired. They won them after some bitter haggling, but Burke then got his revenge. His contentious letters to the National Letter of Intent steering committee resulted in one-year no-play penalties on the girls at their new schools—penalties since reversed on appeal.

"I think what he gets out of it is, 'Don't mess with Morgan Burke,'" says an enraged Andrew Honeycutt, Andrea's dad. "If you do, you have to pay." Adds Katie's father, Jim Coleman, "We're not talking about Michael Jordan; we're talking about letting a young girl have a positive college experience. I don't

think he can see that beyond his own ego."

Dunn is preparing a civil suit and has filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, charging sex and age discrimination. But she did so only when Purdue, after months of

stalling, refused to grant her a grievance hearing.

"I don't know if they thought I would just go away," says Dunn, who has little to lose. "But if it takes me to the Supreme Court, I'm going to pursue this." ☸

There's no surer way to grab control from a strong woman than to raise the lesbian bugaboo.

Todd Bozeman knew all the tricks. Except how not to get caught.

EVERY MIDDLING, MUDDLING college basketball program in the United States dreams of finding a Todd Bozeman, a Coach Charming who can lift the team to instant greatness.

And every college in that position fears it will wind up like Cal.

There's a fine line between a fairy tale and a scary tale.

In the early days of the Todd Bozeman Era, Cal's then-athletic director, Bob Bockrath, gushed about his new young coach, "He's brought stability to the program, fun and excitement to the team."

Less than four years later, the message to Bozeman was, "Don't let the Golden Gate hit you in the ass on your way out of town."

Talk about turning a program around. Bozeman turned Cal's around, and around, until it got dizzy and fell down.

Bozeman swore he was the innocent victim of a conspiracy, and maybe if he'd been allowed to stay he would have explained the cars, agents, cash payoffs, mysterious couriers, threats, extortion schemes, broken promises, ugly rumors, player defections, potential sex scandals, and secret tape recordings.

Then again, maybe not.

Bozeman would have spent more time explaining than coaching, and his defense didn't exactly get off to a roaring start.

The tapes, recorded secretly in a restaurant by the father of former Cal player Jelani Gardner, reportedly have Bozeman listening to talk of large cash payments to the player's parents, and of demands for

more money. This would make Bozeman at least a co-conspirator, if only by his failure to report to the NCAA.

Let's just say that if you are ever caught on tape committing a major indiscretion, pray that your strongest defense is more substantial than: *Uh, that kind of tape recording is illegal in California, isn't it?*

Cal officials feared they'd only seen the tip of the iceberg, so even though the hoops revival under Bozeman inspired plans for a massive renovation of ancient Harmon Gym, the school cut its losses—and its coach.

Oh, the university was losing a man with unique talent. Recruit? He lured Jason Kidd and Lamond Murray to a school that hadn't been to the Sweet 16 since 1960. Last year he landed Shareef Abdur-Rahim.

But three former prep All-Americans transferred out under the Bozeman regime. The coach got low marks for team chemistry, hoops strategy, and PR. And if all the warmth and charm Bozeman radiated to the outside world had been harnessed, it wouldn't have lit the bulb in the broom closet at Harmon.

The Bay Area media gave Bozeman a hero's welcome in 1993, heralding him as the antidote to bad vibes created by deposed martinet Lou Campanelli.

Bozeman's response: suspicion, disdain, and contempt. And that was on a good day.

Such an attitude is hardly unique in a world where Bobby Knight and John Thompson help write the rules of etiquette. But Bozeman was a 29-year-old

rookie coach whose audience consisted of far more fawners than critics.

Bozeman is black, and his promotion to head coach despite his youth and lack of experience was quietly hailed as a progressive move. The Bay Area prides itself on being ahead of the curve in busting down society's racial barriers. Yet Bozeman blamed much of the criticism directed at him on simple racism.

Cal was surely wishing its young coach registered a higher personality quotient, but what the heck. He revived a dormant program, brought pride and honor—and winning—back to Cal hoops. Right?

Sort of. Bozeman's '93 honeymoon trip to the Sweet 16 was followed by a first-round NCAA Tournament loss ('94), a 13-14 season ('95), another first-round KO ('96), and a bleak outlook for this season.

Cal's accustomed to mediocre basketball, but not to being labeled an outlaw program. With bad news piling up at Bozeman's feet like autumn leaves, they gave him the boot.

He left in character. He accused the NCAA of conducting "an unfair and continued pursuit of me."

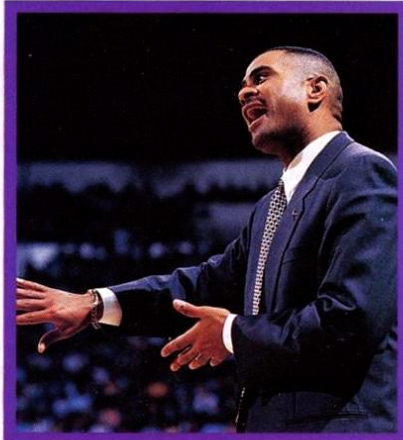
Now, in terms of fairness and compassion, the NCAA has never been confused with Judge Wapner's People's Court. But what was the NCAA supposed to do with the incriminating tape that got dropped in its lap? Toss it in the dumpster?

Bozeman didn't exactly hit any grace notes with his farewell message: "I'll be a success, regardless," said a bitter Boze. "This is just a bump in the road."

So: you colleges out there shopping for a miracle worker for your basketball program, listen up. If you're curious about what a quickie renaissance might cost in today's market, just contact Bump-in-the-Road University at Berkeley.

They'll probably tell you that if you have to ask what it costs, you can't afford it.

Scott Ostler is a columnist with the San Francisco Chronicle.



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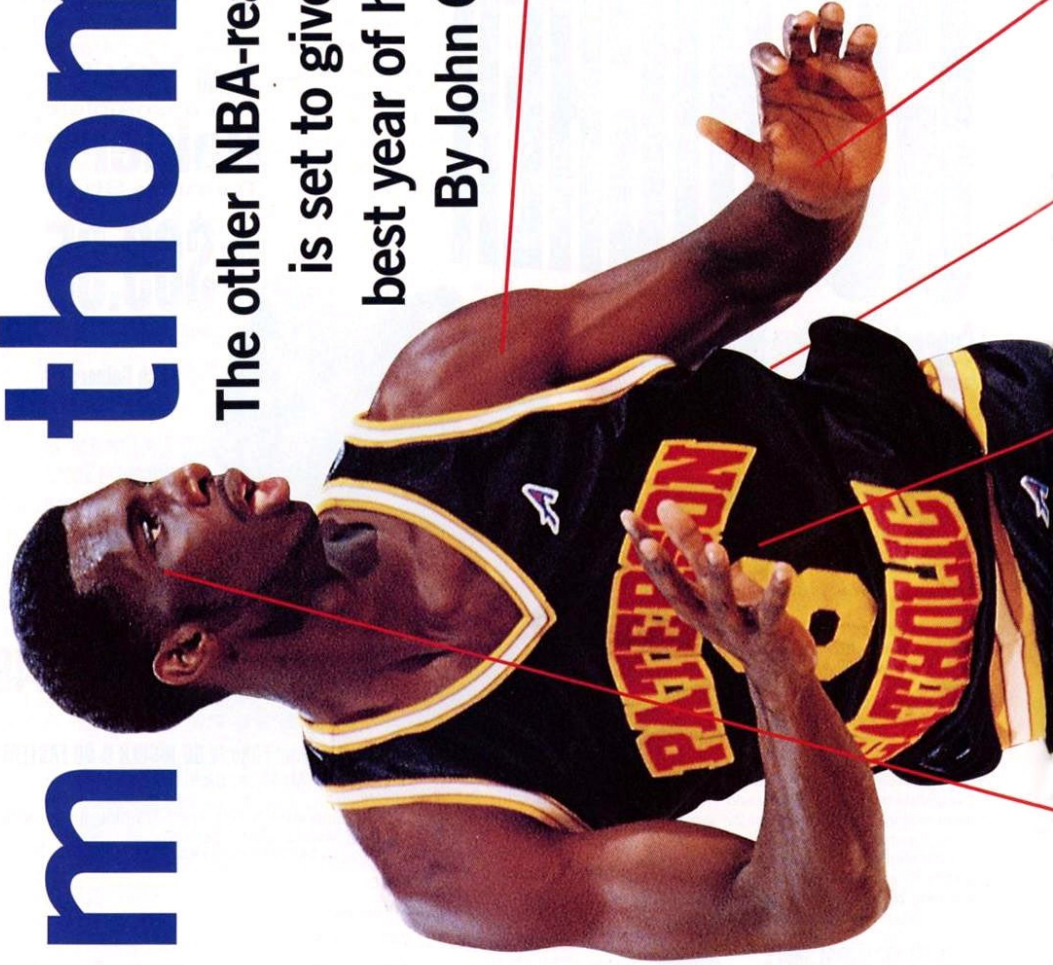
thomas

The other NBA-ready schoolboy
is set to give 'Nova the
best year of his young life.

By John Gustafson

HEAVY LOAD

On the broad beyond-his-years shoulders of freshman Tim Thomas rests the (near) future of Villanova basketball. Smart call. Listen to one who knows, St. Patrick's (Elizabeth, N.J.) HS coach Kevin Boyle, who saw Thomas twice last season: "He's by far the best I've ever seen in high school, a probable 1, 2, or 3 pick in the draft." Are the expectations too much? Probably not. But his new coach, Steve Lappas, is taking no chances, throwing a Hoyasque wall around his protégé. The bigger issue? Whether the real leaders here—seniors Jason Lawson and Alvin Williams, first-rounders in their own right—can see past the hype and get the kid involved.



READY TO ROLL?

The knock against Thomas is his lack of intensity—he plays hard only when he wants to. But maybe he's just been bored with the competition. Oettinger, for one, thinks it's a bad rap: "When he's challenged, he steps up." Boyle isn't buying it either: "He really matured over the last 20 games of his senior season." It's the old story: the guy's so smooth it looks like he's not trying.

GOING UP

Some liken the long-legged freshman to a pre-ACL Danny Manning. Not exactly: Manning was never the leaper Thomas is. "He has great timing, great jumping ability," says Hurley. Problem is, he relies too much on his hops. "It's the Magic Johnson syndrome. When you're that big and talented, your coach wants you to go down low, but you want to play on the perimeter and jump over people."

LIKE BUTTER

Name another 6'10" teenager who'll break a press with a crossover dribble? Thomas is a third guard on the floor. "He has the ball-handling skills of Kobe Bryant, but he's four inches taller," says Lappas. And he passes well for someone of any size. Adds recruiting expert Brick Oettinger: "He can whip a one-hander off the dribble to an open teammate."

PICKING HIS SPOT

Where does Thomas want to play? Check the number on his back. Despite his size, Tim's a true number three. "When he chose Villanova, I think Tim took into consideration the guys we had [center Lawson and power forward Chuck Kornejag], " says Lappas. For his size, he's got great range and, unlike many college perimeter men, he shoots well off the dribble. But, Thomas will have to play with his back to the basket some. "Down the line he's going to be asked to rebound," says Oettinger. Note: Small forward Kerry Kittles was the Cats' top boarder last year.

POSTMARKED

Shawn Kemp. That's the name that keeps coming up. And Thomas could be the star's body double. As for his game, though, think Scottie Pippen. "The weakest part of his game is his power moves," says Oettinger. "It's like he's embarrassed to take guys down low. It's too easy." But it's just a matter of practice. Adds Hurley: "Post moves come down to repetition. Nova will post him up and he'll improve down low."

THOMAS FILE

BORN: Feb. 26, 1977
HEIGHT: 6'10" WEIGHT: 235
HOMETOWN: Paterson, N.J.
HIGH SCHOOL: Paterson Catholic
SENIOR STATISTICS
POINTS PER GAME: 29.6
REBOUNDS PER GAME: 11.5
BLOCKS PER GAME: 5.0

ON A FAST TRACK

Thomas is a young man in a hurry. Last year, Stephen Marbury was the frosh most likely to go one and out. This time, Thomas is. Good thing, then, that he's a blur on the court, too. St. Anthony's (Jersey City) HS coach Bobby Hurley Sr., says, "part of what makes him great is he has the feet of a small player." Feet quick enough for senior Tim to get five blocks a game. Now, Thomas' feet matter most for his perimeter D: "It's a major adjustment," says Boyle. "Tim needs to work on moving his feet and getting through screens. But he's got the quickness to do it."

The ESPN logo is positioned at the top center of the page. The background of the entire page is a close-up, textured image of an orange basketball with dark brown lines forming a star pattern across it.

ESPN

1996-97 college preview our picks:

THE TOP 64 TEAMS

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. kansas | 11. syracuse | 22. uconn | 33. tulane | 44. maryland | 55. rhode island |
| 2. cincinnati | 12. arkansas | 23. boston college | 34. georgia tech | 45. marquette | 56. florida state |
| 3. kentucky | 13. arizona | 24. purdue | 35. south carolina | 46. texas tech | 57. pittsburgh |
| 4. wake forest | 14. clemson | 25. indiana | 36. oklahoma st. | 47. unl | 58. illinois state |
| 5. utah | 15. iowa state | 26. louisville | 37. tula | 48. memphis | 59. ua-little rock |
| 6. ucla | 16. umass | 27. providence | 38. virginia | 49. auburn | 60. virginia commonwealth |
| 7. villanova | 17. new mexico | 28. geo. washington | 39. st. john's | 50. alabama | 61. louisiana state |
| 8. michigan | 18. fresno state | 29. georgetown | 40. washington | 51. missouri | 62. oklahoma |
| 9. north carolina | 19. texas | 30. temple | 41. michigan state | 52. minnesota | 63. brigham young |
| 10. duke | 20. stanford | 31. tennessee | 42. illinois | 53. mississippi st. | 64. xavier |
| | 21. iowa | 32. penn state | 43. oregon | 54. ua-birmingham | |

your picks:

Name another magazine that actually cares who you think is going to make it to the Big Dance. ESPN COLLEGE BASKETBALL offers you the chance to prove you really do know better than we do. Just fill out this entry form or an 8½" by 11" piece of paper with your name, address, and telephone number, plus your picks as we've listed them below.

Please take care to print legibly in block letters, using the team names as presented in our picks to the left. If you're crazy enough to pick a team we've left out of our top 64, you must use the proper names of the schools you select to avoid confusion between schools with similar names (such as Michigan State and the University of Michigan). Entries with unclear team names will be disqualified.

GRAND PRIZE: 36" diagonal **RCA** Home Theatre™ Stereo TV with matching base (suggested retail value: \$1,800).

FIRST PRIZE: **RCA** Proview™ VHS-C Compact Camcorder with 3" LCD color display panel (suggested retail value: \$900).

SECOND PRIZE: 25" diagonal **RCA** color TV with built-in VCR (suggested retail value: \$500).

your sweet 16

1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____
5 _____	6 _____	7 _____	8 _____
9 _____	10 _____	11 _____	12 _____
13 _____	14 _____	15 _____	16 _____

your top four

1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____
---------	---------	---------	---------

championship game

1 _____	2 _____
---------	---------

winner _____	final score _____
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your name _____

address _____ city/state _____ zip _____

telephone (optional) _____

The chances of winning depend on the number of entries received and the number of correct picks per entry. One Grand Prize winner, one First Prize winner, and one Second Prize winner will be selected based upon the following criteria in descending order: 1) Pick championship winner. 2) Pick highest number of championship finalists. 3) Pick highest number of top four participants. 4) Pick highest number of final 16 teams in the tournament. 5) Closest prediction of final cumulative score of championship game. 6) Random drawing from entries remaining tied after steps 1 through 5. All decisions of the sponsors in determining the winner are final. Winner will be notified by mail within 30 days of completion of the championship tournament. Winner must return an affidavit of eligibility/publicity and liability release within 14 days of notification or an alternate winner will be selected in accordance with these rules.

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Only one entry permitted per person. You must be at least 18 years old and a legal resident of the United States. Employees and their families of the Hearst Corporation, Capital Cities/ABC, ESPN, and their subsidiaries and affiliates are not eligible to participate. All entries must be received no later than December 31, 1996. Sponsor not responsible for lost, late, stolen, incomplete, or illegible entries. Void where prohibited. Entry and acceptance of prize constitutes permission to use winner's name, photograph or likeness for promotional purposes without additional compensation. Any taxes payable on the prize are the sole responsibility of the winner. To receive the names of the winners, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to ESPN COLLEGE BASKETBALL SWEEPSTAKES, Radio City Station, P.O. Box 833, New York, NY 10101-0833 no later than January 30, 1997.

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New York, NY 10101-0833**

If it ain't broke...

So they made us liars last year. Go, Jayhawks!

ALL-AMERICANS

1ST TEAM

C - Tim Duncan, Wake Forest
F - Keith Van Horn, Utah
F - Danny Fortson, Cincinnati
G - Brevin Knight, Stanford
G - Jacque Vaughn, Kansas

2ND TEAM

C - Adonal Foyle, Colgate
F - Ron Mercer, Kentucky
F - Maurice Taylor, Michigan
G - Shea Seals, Tulsa
G/F - Anthony Parker, Bradley

This time the Jayhawk Five will top the charts 'til April.

Last year we picked Kansas to win it all. This year we're picking them again. And next year, if they don't win this year... well, we don't think we'll have to cross that bridge.

Jayhawk coach Roy Williams has proved every bit as good and greedy about hoarding blue-chippers as that guy at the other K school, the one who made us look bad last spring. How talented and deep is Williams' roster? Consider: Kansas opens the season as the No. 1 team in the land—even though point guard Jacque Vaughn, the best in college hoops, is out with a cast on his wrist until December. *That* talented. *That* deep.

All five Kansas starters return from last season's 29-5 squad. Jerod Haase will have forgotten last season's shooting slump. And by the time Vaughn comes back, soph Ryan Robertson will have played a month, which will help in March.

But we're not engraving the trophy yet. Other teams could easily pull another Kentucky on us.

One of them is Kentucky. Even though the Wildcats lost practically a whole team of NBA draft picks—Tony Delk, Walter McCarty, Antoine Walker, and Mark Pope—the carryovers from Rick Pitino's championship team are convinced they can lead another title run. The 10-deep roster has future pro Ron Mercer, plus senior

Jared Prickett, and 6'10" center Jamaal Magloire, Canada's best prep prospect.

Tough as those Cats are, the Cats on the other side of the Ohio could be even tougher—and more familiar. This season's Cincinnati Bearcats are pretty much the same bunch who reached the Elite Eight a year ago. The Bearcats are led by Danny Fortson, the nation's best power forward. And they've got that big, bruising D—like the one Syracuse used to stop Kansas in the Tournament. One big change: coach Bob Huggins has a new juco forward who can score.

Watch shoo-in first-rounder Tim Duncan, who's determined to get his diploma from Wake Forest and plans to celebrate by endorsing a big check shortly after graduation. Surrounded by three starters from last year's Elite Eight team, Duncan could get a championship ring, as well.

Add Villanova and UCLA to the contender list. 'Nova has a formidable blend of young talent and senior leadership. And the Bruins can run with anyone. (But can they walk with Princeton?)

But we've got Kansas on our card for the last dance in April. In pencil, this time.

BONUS@ESPNET

On Dec. 9, we'll be updating our team previews and posting them at:
<http://ESPNET.SportsZone.com>


CONFERENCE WINNERS

ACC: Wake Forest **AMERICA EAST:** Drexel **ATLANTIC 10:** UMass **BIG EAST:** Villanova
BIG TEN: Michigan **BIG 12:** Kansas **BIG SKY:** Idaho State **BIG SOUTH:** Liberty
BIG WEST: Utah State **COLONIAL:** Virginia Commonwealth **CONFERENCE USA:**
Cincinnati **IVY:** Princeton **METRO ATLANTIC:** Fairfield **MID-AMERICAN:** Miami of
Ohio **MID-CONTINENT:** Buffalo **MID-EASTERN:** Coppin State **MIDWESTERN**
COLLEGIATE: Detroit Mercy **MISSOURI VALLEY:** Illinois State **NORTHEAST:** Monmouth
OHIO VALLEY: Austin Peay **PAC-10:** UCLA **PATRIOT:** Colgate **SEC:** Kentucky
SOUTHERN: Tennessee-Chattanooga **SOUTHLAND:** McNeese State **SOUTHWESTERN**
ATHLETIC: Jackson State **SUN BELT:** Arkansas-Little Rock **TRANS AMERICA:** College
of Charleston **WAC:** Utah **WEST COAST:** Saint Mary's





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Don't condemn this old Haase just yet.

SCHEDULE

All right, maybe Vaughn will be missed early on. The Hawks should get through the Maui Classic: **LSU**, then **Iowa** or **California**. But how about this early December stretch? **Cincinnati** in the Great Eight on Dec. 4, at **UCLA** on Dec. 7, and **George Washington** in Lawrence four days later. Before it's over, the Hawks see 11 NCAA Tourney teams.



It's a bad wrist, for Pete's sake. Not an arrest. Not graduation. Not, heaven forbid, an early slide into the pros. Just a bad wrist. And a bad wrist heals.

And when it does, Jacques Vaughn will be able to use it to hoist the national championship trophy over his head.

Are we crazy? The Kansas Jayhawks No. 1? Isn't this, almost to a man, the same crew that couldn't get out of the Midwest Regional last March? Exactly. When they had it going on, they were good enough to win it all last year, and that makes them good enough to win it this time.

When Vaughn tore ligaments in his right wrist during a pickup game in September, the prognosis was he'd be lost for four months. Oh, no! Out 'til January! How will the Jayhawks manage?

Let's see—that game against Brown should be a real nail-biter. And the one against UNC-Asheville is bound to be a barn burner now too. By the time the All-American point guard returns, Kansas will be—what?—9-4, maybe, instead of 12-1. Big deal. Conference play doesn't begin until Jan. 4.

The temporary loss of Vaughn means only four starters return from last year's 29-5 team. Vaughn's replacement? Only the guy who broke Jason Kidd's national high school record for combined points and assists.

Yes, Jayhawk fans, the sky is falling, all right. On the rest of the NCAA.

KEY STAT

15

Looking for bad signs? Among the last 37 NCAA champs, only one has had a leading scorer who averaged less than 15 points (Billy Thompson, Louisville, 14.9 in 1986). KU's last two leading scorers have been Jerod Haase (15.0) and Raef LaFrentz (13.4). None of KU's past 11 Big Eight title teams has featured anyone who's scored more than 20 per.

THE PLAYERS

Captain Jacques

Best three-point field goal percentage on the team. Best free-throw percentage. Best assist-to-turnover ratio. Okay, so Ryan Robertson did all that in a little under 10 minutes a game—the guy was a freshman. He'll do just fine while Vaughn recoups. Fact is, if Vaughn weren't Vaughn, he would already be yesterday's news.

But Vaughn is Vaughn: the best point guard in America. Don't look for his value on his stat line—10.9 points, 6.6 assists. What he gives up with an inconsistent jumper, he makes up for in leadership and ball-handling. No one runs a team better. Had he been healthy all season,

he might have commanded the Wooden Award.

Shooting guard Jerod Haase took most of the heat for last season's failures. The team's leading scorer two years ago, he dropped to fourth, barely cracking double figures (10.8). And not for a lack of touches. He was 7 for 30 in his last three games and missed all nine of his shots in the Tournament loss to Syracuse. The rest of his game backslid as well.

Hey, you never had a bad year? We say the pendulum swings back for Haase this time—he's too smart and too smooth.

Paul Pierce, the small forward, looked like a freshman for about five minutes last season. Then he started calling for clearouts and taking defenders to the hole with a wanna-see-it-again first step. So he shot only 42 percent—he's still one of the two or three best on the court every night. Someday, he'll be the Big 12 player of the year.

This year, his frontcourt mate Raef LaFrentz could be. It's taken a while, but the 6'11" junior has finally developed a bit of a snarl to go with his pro-style inside game.

He scores as much as he needs to (13.4 points in 27 minutes per game) and plays competent D. Now, Raef, how about a 15-footer?

Senior center Scot Pollard, who led the team in blocks, relishes the inside game



LaFrentz is focused on the big prize this year.

sas

even more than LaFrentz. And though he may be the last option in this offense, it's not because he has no touch. He led the Jayhawks in shooting, too.

So what's the problem? Rebounding. Kansas went into last year's NCAA Tournament having been outboarded in its previous five games. LaFrentz and Pollard don't get nearly the number of caroms they should (15.6 per game between them).

The bench sags with the weight of all the guys waiting their turn. Junior guard Billy Thomas is a wing shooter of the purest sort. Senior power forward B.J. Williams has the size and strength to get the job done underneath. So for that matter, does forward T.J. Pugh, the big surprise of the freshman class last season. And junior C.B. McGrath will see time at the point while Vaughn is on

RECRUITING GRADE

So they bagged only one guy. It's not like they have a whole bunch of roster spots to fill. Swingman **Nicky Bradford** averaged 21 points, seven rebounds, and four assists for Fayetteville High, which overlooks the Arkansas campus. How did Nolan Richardson let him get away? The bigger question is, did Nolan even want him? Fact is, Bradford will fit the more structured KU system better.

the mend. But if Robertson goes down...? Hey, the Hawks are deep, but not *that* deep.

LOWDOWN

Flying High

The Jayhawks won or shared five of the last six Big Eight regular-season titles. Ink them in as the

inaugural Big 12 champs. But that's just the beginning.

Yes, Iowa State showed tough man-to-man defense can stop the Jayhawks. Syracuse stumped them with physical play as well. But before you write them off, remember Kansas lost those two games by a total of four points. That's a couple of Haase jumpers—jumpers he'll bury this time.

Vaughn's wrist injury is a blip. Expectations should still lean to the Final Four variety. Williams has arguably the best eight-deep in the country—and some unfinished business after falling short two years running. He's getting a rep—the kind of rep only six wins in March will erase.

Bottom line: the Final Four isn't good enough. The Kansas Jayhawks have to win it all.

Bottom bottom line: they will. With one hand behind their back.



When Jacques's hand heals, the Hawks will be No. 1.

GOOD NEWS

- KU has spent 35 consecutive weeks in the top 10.
- Jayhawks get a year ahead in the development of **Ryan Robertson**.
- Coach **Roy Williams** tied N.C. State's Everett Case for most wins by a Division I coach in his first eight seasons: 213.

BAD NEWS

- **Williams** still hasn't proven he can win the big one.
- KU is only 11-6 in games decided by six points or fewer in the past two seasons, 3-2 in postseason tournaments.
- **Jerod Haase** made more than half his shots only once in the last 22 games.

STARTING FIVE

LAFRENTZ

All-Big Eight junior led team in scoring (13.4) and rebounding (8.2). He's still getting better.

PIERCE

The most athletic Jayhawk was Big Eight's co-Freshman of the Year.

POLLARD

Banger lives for the inside game. No one pushes him off his mark.

HAASE

Expect a bounce-back from a guy whose game took a big dive last year.

VAUGHN

His assist to turnover ratio is good (2.35). His latest GPA is better (4.0).

OFF THE BENCH

ROBERTSON (G)

Gets to show off what he can do in a job that will be all his next year anyway.

THOMAS (G)

Look for him behind the arc—125 of his 151 shots were from back there.

WILLIAMS (F)

Top-scoring reserve with 4.8 per game. But his real game is defense.



Ain't nobody can hold down The Fort.

SCHEDULE

Cincinnati gets a break by drawing Conference USA rival **UAB** at home this year; the Bearcats have lost three straight to the Blazers in Birmingham. And they catch **Arkansas** at home on Jan. 18. **Memphis** and **Louisville** are tough road tests, but no big deal for a team that plans to spend the entire month of March traveling. By the way, want to catch an early dress rehearsal of the NCAA championship? Get to the Great Eight Tournament at Chicago's United Center on Dec. 4 for Cincinnati vs. **Kansas**.



Looking for a recipe for a national championship? Take an All-American power forward (Danny Fortson) who pretty much defines the position. Add a juco scoring machine (Ruben Patterson) at the other wing to take the pressure off your main man. Throw in a brace of solid senior backcourt men (Damon Flint and Darnell Burton), each a 1,000-point career scorer. Blend with a strong bench and the country's best (or close to it) recruiting class. And stir until March, all the while praying—that's what coach/chef Bobby Huggins is doing as you read this—that you're not shy one critical ingredient.

You don't win national titles without a quality point guard—at least that's what the deep thinkers tell us—and Cincinnati enters the season with two juco transfers battling for the job. One of them—Charles Williams or D'Juan Baker—had better have the goods.

The Bearcats have a supercharged offense and a muscular, punishing defense. They have the talent to win a lot of games—and the Conference USA championship—without a standout at the point. But to win a national title, Williams or Baker has to harness all that power.

Here's a free tip for the two contenders: pass the ball to Fortson.

THE PLAYERS

Power Pack

Last season's Conference USA Player of the Year—20.1 points, 9.6 rebounds a game—Fortson is

KEY STAT

38.9

Danny Fortson's bicep measurement? Hey, he's big, but not that big. Cincinnati's muscle and aggressiveness held opponents to 38.9 percent shooting last year, seventh in the nation. With their offensive firepower, the Bearcats just need to come close to matching that figure to blow out a lot of teams.

a strong early candidate for national Player of the Year in '96-97. Underline strong. And if you don't think he warrants it, you be the one to tell him. At 6'7" and 260, Fortson could be an NFL tight end or an NBA power forward—on the same weekend. And if you're thinking about pushing him away from the basket, better bring along a forklift.

Those double-teams and collapsing zones that Fortson had to fight through last season will be less effective this year, provided Patterson, an explosive leaper who can score inside and out, lives up to his credentials—and his mouth. One of the first things the juco All-American did when he arrived on the Cincinnati campus last summer was to guarantee a national championship. (You average 27.1

points and 9.3 rebounds, you're entitled to speak your mind.)

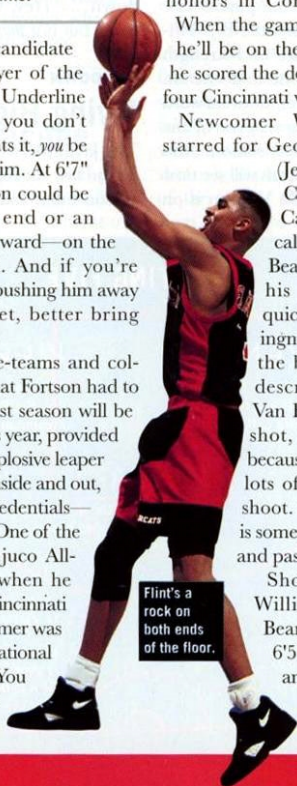
Flint, a muscular 6'5" and 201, is the most versatile player on the team, having played point guard and small forward as well as off-guard, his natural position. He logged more floor time than any other UC player last year and connected on 34.6 percent of his three-pointers.

Burton comes off the bench again, as he did last year when he averaged 14 points, hit 41.4 percent from three-point range, and earned Sixth Man of the Year honors in Conference USA.

When the game is on the line, he'll be on the floor: last year he scored the deciding points in four Cincinnati victories.

Newcomer Williams, who starred for George Tarkanian (Jerry's son) at Chaffey College in California, gets first call at point guard. Bearcat coaches love his court vision, quickness, and willingness to distribute the ball. He's been described as Nick Van Exel without the shot, which is fine, because Cincinnati has lots of guys who can shoot. What's needed is someone to penetrate and pass.

Should the 6'2" Williams falter, the Bearcats turn to the 6'5" Baker, more of an offensive threat, but lacking



Flint's a rock on both ends of the floor.

nnati

Williams' experience at the point.

The Bearcats have a hole at center, vacated by Art Long, who's ticketed for the CBA. Huggins thought he'd filled it when he signed Jermaine Thomas, whose outside touch and inside explosiveness are matched by his competitiveness. But Thomas didn't take care of his school work this past summer and is back in junior college.

Nominal starter Jackson Julson has a tendency to get hurt and lacks the stamina to play heavy minutes. That could leave 6'7" junior Bobby Brannen, a foul-prone forward, logging more time in the middle than his skills or his size warrant.

The answer to Huggins' prayers might be Kenyon Martin, a 6'8" freshman from Dallas dubbed by Huggins as "the most athletic big man we have ever

RECRUITING GRADE

Two juco stars, **F Ruben Patterson** and **G Charles Williams**, step in as starters with major roles, while another, **G D'Juan Baker**, is the sixth man. That's called making an immediate contribution. The sleeper of the class might be **Kenyon Martin**, a prolific shot-blocker who could give the Cincinnati defense a huge boost if he is academically eligible.

recruited here." Martin can run the floor, pound the boards, and block shots—once he hurdles the NCAA's academic requirements for freshmen.

Two other Bearcats have plenty of upside. Forward Rodrick Monroe showed up at Cincy last year penciled in as a starter but never got untracked. Melvin Levett, an exuberant 6'4" sopho-

more guard who plays hair-on-fire defense, got a delayed start while waiting to clear NCAA eligibility requirements.

LOWDOWN

Point of Order

In the past five years, the Bearcats have made it to the Elite Eight three times and the Final Four once. This year, a national championship? Maybe. Good as Fortson is, he's not the whole story. Patterson has so much potential that even Fortson, who played against him in the U.S. Olympic Festival two summers ago, is amazed by the things he can do. If Williams (or Baker) can handle the point, and if Huggins can patch together a workable rotation at center, the Bearcats might well bring home their first national title since 1962.



GOOD NEWS

- **C Art Long**, who couldn't stay out of trouble and didn't play to his potential, has moved on.
- The Bearcats have enough athletic guards to crank up full-court pressure.
- No fewer than four Bearcats—**Danny Fortson**, **Damon Flint**, **Darnell Burton**, and **Ruben Patterson**—have legit first-round NBA draft aspirations.

BAD NEWS

- Cincinnati has no true center to replace **Long**.
- It always takes a while for newcomers to adjust to **Bobby Huggins'** rant-and-rave style.
- Draft aspirations could cause **Fortson**, **Flint**, **Burton**, and **Patterson** to forgo team play and pad stat lines.

STARTING FIVE

FORTSON

An immovable force with an oh-so-soft shooting touch. Demands the ball at crunchtime.

PATTERSON

Versatile offensively, he takes pressure off Fortson. Needs to work on D.

JULSON

Fragile big man with good shooting range and shot-blocking ability. Best free-throw shooter on the team.

FLINT

Streak shooter from outside. Long arms make him an excellent defender on the perimeter.

WILLIAMS

Extremely quick, natural point guard who loves to push the ball downcourt on the fast break.

OFF THE BENCH

BURTON (G)

More than 1,000 career points despite making only 14 starts in three years.

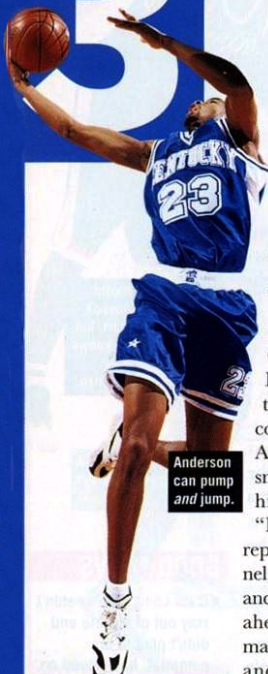
BAKER (G/F)

Can play three positions. Could take over at the point if Williams falters.

MONROE (F)

Strong rebounder, accurate shooter from close in. Will spell Patterson and Fortson.

3 kent



Anderson can pump and jump.

SCHEDULE

A typically tough non-conference bill this year tips off at the Great Alaska Shootout in a rematch with Syracuse. Then there are the annual bouts with rivals Indiana (Dec. 7), Notre Dame (Dec. 14), and Louisville (New Year's Eve) and a showdown with Villanova (Feb. 9). With a docket this perilous, these Cats will need at least nine lives.

Somewhere in the depths of Continental Airlines Arena in New Jersey, less than 30 minutes into their National Championship reign, the Kentucky Wildcats are making their way to a postgame press conference. Junior guard Derek Anderson, a piece of freshly snipped net clamped tightly in his teeth, stridently chirps "Repeat!" to the throngs of reporters assembled in the tunnel. Senior teammates Mark Pope and Walter McCarty, walking just ahead of the brash underclassman, glance over their shoulders and greet his comment with "that's-your-problem" laughter.

At the time, the notion of going back-to-back seemed both mildly amusing and highly unlikely, with leading scorer Tony Delk about to join leading shot-blocker McCarty and top reserve Pope at graduation ceremonies, soon to be followed by a return trip to East Rutherford for the NBA draft.

In May, it seemed even less amusing and quite a bit more unlikely, as leading rebounder Antoine Walker unexpectedly skipped out for a shot at lottery dollars in June.

Then, later in May, coach Rick Pitino seemed poised to dive head-first into a pile of swampland money and abandon the Bluegrass State for the Garden State. Suddenly, talk of a repeat was taken as a cruel joke, and not a single soul in the commonwealth was chirping about much of anything, let alone another championship.

But Pitino stayed, and the key

KEY STAT

22

The Wildcats didn't just beat opponents last year—they crushed them, by an average margin of 22 points. This year, however, they'll be without 51.9 of those points per game, now that Delk, McCarty, Pope, and Walker have strutted off to the NBA. That's okay: last we looked, a close win still counts.

missing ingredient—6'10" center Jamaal Magloire—decided to come. That combo brings back-to-back into the realm of possibility.

Everybody knew that, sooner or later, all that talent Pitino's been stockpiling would come in pretty handy. Welcome to sooner.

THE PLAYERS

Catucopia

Last year Pitino was like an air-traffic controller during a blizzard, keeping all the egos in the air and trying to get everyone in without a crash. He parceled out minutes with an eyedropper, letting no one average more than 27 a game.

It worked. The coach/shrink massaged All-American psyches to get them to play together and sit together as one happy family. He juggled 11 players and didn't drop a single one.

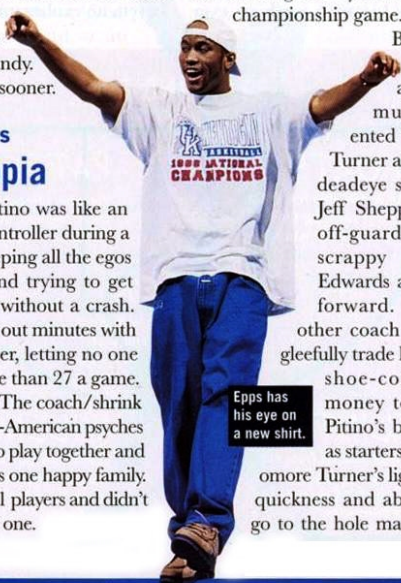
This year, he will have fewer balls in the air.

Make no mistake, Pitino still has eight top-shelf players he can turn to without worry, and 10 he can call on without panic. Kentucky has capable backups everywhere, and enough athletic bodies to press with duress.

Seniors Anthony Epps and Anderson are the starters at point and off-guard, respectively. Epps started 25 of 36 games, averaging 6.7 points and 4.9 assists in less than 23 minutes. Anderson, the Cats' leading returning scorer, pumped in 9.4 points and snagged 3.4 rebounds. He moves to the backcourt to make room at small forward for title-game hero Ron Mercer. The 6'7" Mercer earned all-tourney honors at the Final Four, capped by a 20-point performance against Syracuse in the championship game.

Behind them are the multitalented Wayne Turner at point, deadeye shooter Jeff Sheppard at off-guard, and scrappy Allen Edwards at wing forward. Any other coach would gleefully trade half his shoe-contract money to have Pitino's backups as starters. Sophomore Turner's lightning quickness and ability to go to the hole make him

Epps has his eye on a new shirt.



LAST SEASON

34-2

ucky

one of the league's top ball-handlers. Pitino mulled redshirting Sheppard to ease the overcrowding, but the senior's 50 percent three-point gunning makes him a valued commodity. Swingman Edwards averaged 3.3 points in limited action a year ago. He's ready to step up.

Getting Magloire was an absolute must for UK after Walker blew town. The 236-pound Canadian was the Great White North's top prospect. He's the shot-blocker and board-crasher this squad otherwise would lack, and with his surprising physical control, the pivot is all his.

Next to him at power forward is Jared Prickett, who only seems like he's been here since the Joe B. Hall days. The fifth-year senior took a medical redshirt last year after knee surgery, and his 698 career points and 552 career

RECRUITING GRADE

So what if they signed only one guy. He happens to be the one guy they had to have. Jamaal Magloire missed out on prep All-American honors, but only because he's Canadian. Forward Heshimu Evans comes over from Manhattan, but can't suit up until next season.

rebounds are welcome back.

Sophomore frontcourt backups Nazr Mohammed and Oliver Simmons can contribute, but Pitino (surprise!) plans to recruit talent that can outclass them next year.

LOWDOWN

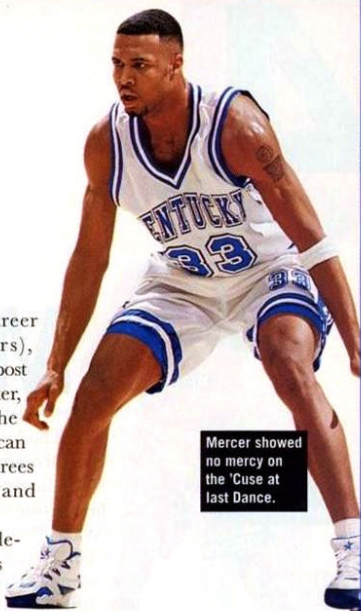
Why Not?

The departing champs left some big holes. Nobody on the roster can shoot like Delk (a school-

record 283 career three-pointers), nobody has the post moves of Walker, and none of the Cats' big men can float out for threes like McCarty and Pope did.

But the trademark quiverings of fear-stricken opponents (UK easily led the nation in victory margin) will still be a factor because of the defense. With the perimeter sextet rotating in and out, Kentucky's confrontational pressure on the ball will be as obnoxious as ever.

So let Derek Anderson chirp away—he can warble an aria, for all we care. After going 18 years without a title, two in 12 months are within Big Blue's reach.



Mercer showed no mercy on the 'Cuse at last Dance.

GOOD NEWS

- The Wildcats have won 13 straight on the road, their best streak since 1951-55, when they notched 19.
- The Cats were the first team in 40 years to go undefeated in the SEC.
- Kentucky's 34 wins moved it ahead of North Carolina as the all-time winningest team in college basketball. (1,650 to 1,647).

BAD NEWS

- Kentucky's top four rebounders from a year ago are gone.
- Jamaal Magloire has never started a college game.
- Losing 57% of your scoring and 56% of your rebounding is bad news, even in Lexington.

STARTING FIVE

PRICKETT

The 6'9" senior gets another shot after missing the championship season because of injury.

MERCER

Swingman was last year's Finals hero. Look for him to be this year's superstar.

MAGLOIRE

Top Canadian prospect must deliver on the glass and as intimidator.

ANDERSON

From small forward to off-guard. Embodies winning attitude on the floor.

EPPS

Kentucky native was underrated last year. He canned 41% of his threes.

OFF THE BENCH

EDWARDS (F)

Tempo goes up when he comes into game. Never saw a loose ball he didn't think was his.

SHEPPARD (G)

Pure shooter who can turn a game around in an eyeblink from beyond the arc.

TURNER (G)

One of the best point guards in the conference, but only the second-best in Lexington.

4 wake



Peral could drain it from Spain—and he's a European who plays D.

May 10, 1996, will go down in the annals of Wake Forest history as D-Day. That's D as in Duncan. As in Decision. As in Draft.

On that day, despite 7 million reasons never to don his Wake Forest jersey again, Tim Duncan announced he would postpone becoming a multimillionaire and return to campus to complete his studies—and his schooling of the ACC.

That's D as in Demon Deacons. As in Domination.

SCHEDULE

The Deacs have three November dates to develop some backcourt depth. In December, they have a chance to prove themselves nationally in games against rebuilding Mississippi State in Chicago, rebuilding UMass at home, and against Utah in Salt Lake City. The challenge from the rest of the schedule, which includes a home game against Virginia Tech and a trip to Missouri, will be handling the pressure of being the overwhelming favorite in the ACC.

Duncan's not the only one who chose to stay. Coach Dave Odom, who turned the program around and has a .664 winning percentage in his seven years at Wake, rejected entreaties from N.C. State and other schools and signed a long-term contract.

That alone means the Demon Deacons could become the first team in nearly three decades to win three straight ACC titles. Factor in four returning starters from a team that tied the school record for victories and you've got a team with the experience, if maybe not the depth, to improve on last year's Elite Eight finish.

But before you book those non-refundable tickets to Indianapolis in April, remember that point guard Tony Rutland, a deadly three-point shooter (40.1 percent) and the team's best playmaker, is coming off reconstructive surgery on his right ACL, and that his backup, shooting guard Jerry

KEY STAT

41

A decent shooting average from two-point range, but a daunting one from beyond the arc—and this year's returning players hit it on their trey attempts last season. That opens up the inside for Tim Duncan and leaves defenses vulnerable. How vulnerable? The Deacons went to the line 611 times; their opponents, 432. And that's a difference of, yes, 41 percent.

Braswell, broke a bone in his foot during a September pickup game and won't play until December.

No one in Winston-Salem admits being worried, especially since insiders say Rutland's knee is stronger than ever. Good thing.

Because if it's not, that's D as in Disaster.

THE PLAYERS

Demons

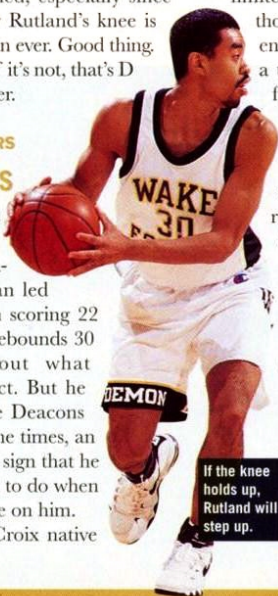
A consensus All-American last season, Duncan led the team in scoring 22 times and rebounds 30 times—about what you'd expect. But he also led the Deacons in assists nine times, an unexpected sign that he knows what to do when two guys are on him.

The St. Croix native

also averaged 19.1 points and 3.75 blocks per contest and improved his overall game, taking more shots and getting to the line more often. After scoring 27 points and grabbing 22 rebounds against Georgia Tech in the ACC title game, he was the unanimous choice as tournament MVP.

Wake's world certainly revolves around Duncan, but defenses would collapse around him if not for Rutland. Like Randolph Childress before him, Rutland (11.9 points, 3.9 assists) spreads the floor with his long-range shooting, court leadership, and ball-handling skill. When the sophomore injured his knee in the Georgia Tech game, the Yellow Jackets swarmed his replacements and nearly stole the tournament.

But with Rutland's availability limited during the NCAAs, those same subs were good enough for three wins and a trip to a regional final for the first time since 1984. That may be a blessing going into this year, as Odom and his staff search for ways to rotate five players in the one and two spots, including the recovering Rutland and Braswell, who worked all summer on his ball-handling and playmaking. Options for backcourt help include swingman Steven Goolsby and Joseph Amonett, a smooth long-distance shooter who spent his summer with Braswell



If the knee holds up, Rutland will step up.



forest

on the Jones Cup Tournament team in Taiwan. Former walk-on Marc Scott can also play the point. He doesn't shoot the ball, but he fills in running the offense and playing defense.

The frontcourt, with three senior starters, is solid. Power forward Sean Allen came on strong during the second half of last season and will deflect some of the rebounding and defensive pressure from Duncan. Spaniard Ricky Peral, who at 6'10" is anything but a "small" forward, can also hit the boards and play defense. He ranked second among the nation's three-point shooters last year, hitting 51 percent—the same as he hit from inside the arc. And during the NCAA Tournament, he was positively lethal, scoring in double figures in every game and hitting eight of his 11 three-point shots.

This team has been together for

RECRUITING GRADE

The absence of forwards Joakim Blom and Shon Coleman will hurt. But **Loren Woods**, perhaps the best freshman coming into the ACC this year, will get a full year of training behind the nation's top center before he takes over Duncan's position. The St. Louis seven-footer blocked 202 shots as a high school senior. In his three-year schoolboy career, he had 996 rebounds and 501 blocks.

a while now and returns four starters from last season's ACC champion team. Odom's style is to play his starters for long stretches, though this year he has a more solid bench than before. And with Rutland and Braswell on the mend, the workload will be distributed, and that will serve the team well the longer it plays into March.

LOWDOWN

Wake Up

With Duncan still around, the Demon Deacons are the best team in the state—and that includes the Charlotte Hornets. But some questions remain, notably the health of Rutland and Braswell, as well as the development of depth up front. Odom lost two recruits when talented forwards Joakim Blom of Sweden and Shon Coleman failed to meet NCAA qualifications and did not enroll this fall. Their absence weakens the team's depth in the backcourt, since Odom had hoped to move Goolsby permanently to shooting guard. Of course, those problems pale in comparison to the one Odom would have faced had Duncan done what just about everyone expected him to do last May.



The sky's the limit for Duncan this year.

GOOD NEWS

- A new contract means **Dave Odom** is no longer the ACC's lowest-paid coach.
- The Deacs held opponents to a .393 field goal percentage, lowest in the ACC.
- The Deacs have won 19 straight at home.

BAD NEWS

- **Tim Duncan's** free-throw percentage fell from .742 to .687 last year.
- Wake Forest had the ACC's worst turnover margin (minus 3.3).
- Three graduating seniors mean next year's team could be the Demon Doormats.

STARTING FIVE

ALLEN

Serviceable post player who stepped up his board work during the second half of the season.

PERAL

Shot a blistering 69.2 percent from the floor in last year's NCAA Tournament.

DUNCAN

Would have been a first-round pick two years running. Hands down, the best player in college basketball.

BRASWELL

Flourishes as a two, fizzles as a one. Great touch from the outside.

RUTLAND

Exorcised Childress' ghost with great floor leadership, but knee's a big concern.

OFF THE BENCH

GOOLSBY (G/F)

Solid three-point shooter (.458) will see plenty of action with Rutland and Braswell mending.

AMONETT (G)

Had better shoot a whole lot better than .143 (3-21) from the field this year.

WOODS (C)

McDonald's All-American averaged 21.1 points, 13.2 boards, and 6.5 blocks as a high school senior.



Doleac's still a bit too nice for his own good.

We're sure you can find *someone* in the good state of Utah who doesn't quite buy into all that family values hoopla. But you won't hear one naysaying peep in the Huntsman Center on the University of Utah campus this year. If Utah's the right-leaningest, god-fearingest example of family values, its poster boy can be found—again—mixing it up on the hardwood.

When Keith Van Horn decided to forsake his wallet for the continued stability of his new wife and baby girl, he instantly made the Utes a Sweet 16, Elite Eight, dare we say, even a Final Four team. Van Horn's as good as it gets—if he played in Durham or Lexington, you'd be sick to death of hearing his name already.

But you know what they say about every silver lining. Here's the problem for coach Rick Majerus' Utes: with the main man back, winning the WAC and a game or two in the NCAA's again won't cut it. Fighting off New Mexico in the Mountain Division, dominating the conference tournament—that stuff's yesterday's news.

And yet, no sure thing. Last year, New Mexico upset Utah in the WAC Tournament final before the Utes advanced to the third round of the real thing. This year, Van Horn's without his trusty second, Brandon Jessie. So it's left to the rest of the gang to prove this isn't a one-man show. If they can make their point, Salt Lake City will be one big happy family this spring.

KEY STAT

78

Teams playing the Utes had better not count on winning a close one at the foul line. Utah's the best foul-shooting team in the country, canning 78 percent last year. Everybody who's anybody in Salt Lake City can hit 7 out of 10 (okay, Andre Miller hits 6.9—so round up). Send the Utes to the line late in the game, and you're going to get the ball back with a larger deficit.

THE PLAYERS

Van Horn o' Plenty

Time was, Utah couldn't handle athletic frontcourts and quick perimeters. Now, it's the Utes who pose the matchup problems.

Van Horn plays small or power forward—and, in either case, he plays it better than the guy he's facing. He pulls taller players outside, drives past slower guys, posts up smaller ones. And he *always* finishes. Call him the conference MVP—for the third time. Van Horn didn't come back for nothing. Stay out of his way.

Okay, so agile forwards (see Clayton Shields, University of New Mexico) still give him some trouble—that's where

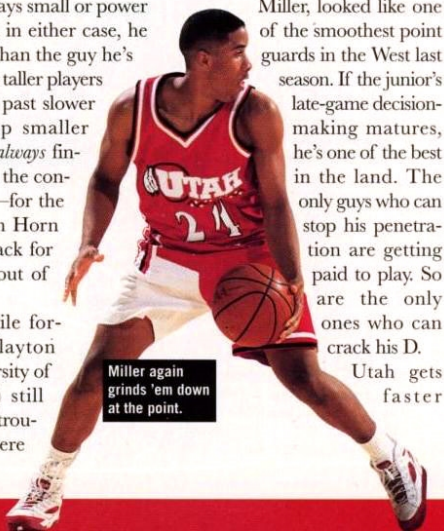
newcomer Ashante Johnson comes in. Johnson, a Prop 42 last season, was San Diego's top schoolboy player two years ago (apologies to Jelani McCoy). His high-flying, fast-breaking game needs no work. But he's got to downshift enough to fit Utah's structured offense. Listen up, Ashante: around here, screening is next to godliness.

If junior center Michael Doleac finds an attitude to match his muscle, WAC centers will run for cover. His rebounding is okay (7.7 a game), but the big guy should be a bit embarrassed when he's outboarded by a less physically imposing teammate (Van Horn, 8.8).

Senior guard Ben Caton's back on the wing. For a guy who knocks it down (49 percent overall, 40 percent from downtown), he still hesitates to pull the trigger. But he's quick and tough, and he leaves it on the floor.

His backcourt mate, Andre Miller, looked like one of the smoothest point guards in the West last season. If the junior's late-game decision-making matures, he's one of the best in the land. The only guys who can stop his penetration are getting paid to play. So are the only ones who can crack his D.

Utah gets faster



Miller again grinds 'em down at the point.

SCHEDULE

Majerus tells anyone who'll listen that his schedule is one of the toughest anywhere. Not quite. The big games with **Texas** and **Wake** are at the Huntsman Center, and a potential biggie vs. **Arizona** (the Wooden Classic) is on a neutral court in Anaheim. Which leaves a road game against crosstown rival **Utah State** as all that stands between the Utes and a nonconference run of the table. Even **Fresno State**, a team that swept them last year, is in the other division.

LAST SEASON

27-7

ah

when the second string checks in. David Jackson gives the Utes scoring punch, if no experience, from—you pick—the point, off-guard, or small forward. Caton's job in the starting lineup is Jackson's next year, sooner if he's particularly precocious. The pressure's on another frosh, Hanno Mottola, to produce right away as well. The Finnish emigré takes the foreign slot left when Australian center Ben Melmeth decided not to return. Mottola's a finesse forward by trade, but he has to crash the boards and defend the post as Doleac's backup.

Good thing Van Horn and Doleac are in good shape—as far as frontline help goes, Mottola's it. Drew Hansen is an underrated defender but extremely limited at the other end. He'll start at small forward if Johnson's not ready. For the Utes' sake, Johnson had better be ready.

RECRUITING GRADE

Hanno Mottola and David Jackson get serious minutes right away, but **Jeff Johnsen's** the biggest prize in this class—not because the redshirt freshman was Utah's two-time Mr. Basketball, but because he gives the Utes the inside track on younger brother Britton, the next Keith Van Horn. **Jordie McCavish**, a six-footer from British Columbia, went from luxury to necessity when backup point guard Terry Preston quit. **Nate Althoff's** a project center.

LOWDOWN

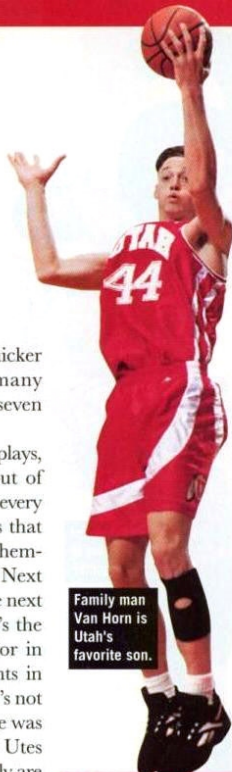
In Their Wake

Van Horn's hunger and Majerus' velvet whip will keep the Utes fighting the good fight all year. And even if a star-quality second option doesn't make himself

known, all this younger, quicker talent gives Majerus as many options as he's had in his seven years here.

The Utes again will make plays, squeeze the best chance out of every possession, and defend every corner of the court. Teams that wait for the Utes to beat themselves will go home losers. Next year, maybe Van Horn is the next Danny Ferry. This year, he's the second-best returning senior in the country. And that counts in this teenagers' game. No, he's not Tim Duncan, and yes, Wake was four points better than the Utes last November. They probably are again. That still makes Utah better than almost everyone else.

Last year, we had Utah No. 17—the team most likely to crack the Sweet 16. They're set up to crack a much more prestigious group this time.



Family man Van Horn is Utah's favorite son.

GOOD NEWS

- Tim Duncan's not the only lottery-level junior who decided being a millionaire could wait.
- The Utes have won 34 of their last 35 home games.
- No coach prepares his team better than Rick Majerus.

BAD NEWS

- There's no frontcourt experience behind Keith Van Horn and Michael Doleac.
- Only two guys—Van Horn and Brandon Jessie—averaged double figures last year. And one is gone.
- New Mexico knows it can beat Utah.

STARTING FIVE

VAN HORN

Leadership qualities befitting a senior. How many ways can he beat you? How many you got?

JOHNSON

Newcomer gets to the hole and keeps foes away. But can he hit the jumper?

DOLEAC

Soft hands and a physical game. But quicker centers get the best of him.

CATON

Stand-up shooter with nice range. Deceptively quick defender.

MILLER

Knows his range—no threes allowed. More than his 4.6 assists a game is a lock.

OFF THE BENCH

JACKSON (G)

Freshman adds speed, shooting (53 % FG, 89 % FT as a HS senior), and scoring (22 ppg).

MOTTOLA (F/C)

Finnish import brings typical European skills: nice touch, no post-up moves.

HANSEN (G/F)

Majerus' kind of guy. Heavy on D, but no offensive game worth mentioning.



Can J.R. get this team to rise again?

SCHEDULE

Whaddya know? Things could get interesting early if the Bruins meet up with **Princeton** again in the preseason NIT. First one to get 43, wins. On Dec. 7, they get a slide when Jacques Vaughn-less **Kansas** visits Pauley Pavilion. Last year's game with Vaughn in Lawrence ended in a 15-point rout. **UCLA's** other nonconference tests are **Illinois**, **Louisville**, and **Duke**.

LAST SEASON

23-8

Funny what an Ivy League education can do for you. Or to you.

Just think what life at UCLA might be like if Princeton coach Pete Carril hadn't taught the Bruins a thing or two about basketball last March. Picture the head-swelled receiving line that would have greeted UCLA coach Jim Harrick at Pauley Pavilion this month if his players hadn't run into Carril's Tigers in the first round of the Tournament. Scarier still, picture the beeline Jelani McCoy, Toby Bailey, and J.R. Henderson might have made to the NBA.

Thanks to Princeton's stunning upset, though, all five Bruin starters came back to campus for another year of study—the same five Bruins who led UCLA to a 16-2 record in the Pac-10 last season.

Toss in double-digit scorer Kris Johnson off the bench and you begin to see why the folks out in La-La Land figure Showtime kicks off in Pauley while they're still holding rehearsals in the Forum. They haven't seen talent like this in years, not since a fella by the name of Wooden strolled the pines, dishing out scholarships.

Now if they can just figure out what to do with it.

THE PLAYERS

Dollar and Change

Once again, the Bruins' title hopes rest in point guard Cameron Dollar's hands. The big hitch in their Final Four dreams is that Dollar is fighting twin—get this—pinky injuries. That's right, a lig-

KEY STAT

9-0

Paging Mr. Dollar! Paging Mr. Dollar! What can a solid point guard who keeps his wits (and the ball) do for this team? The Bruins had a perfect record in the nine games in which they equaled or bettered their opponents in avoiding turnovers. In the 22 games that they did not, they finished 14-8.

Bailey may have to call the shots for one more year.

ament tear on his right hand and a dislocated finger on his left kept the Bruin playmaker from finding his stroke last season. (He averaged only 4.1 points in 26 minutes.)

His passing game struggled too, prompting coach Harrick to try Plan B. He moved off-guard Bailey to the point, where he threatened to invent the quadruple-double—points, assists, rebounds, and turnovers. Against Washington in Seattle, Bailey coughed the ball up 12 times.

Plan C?

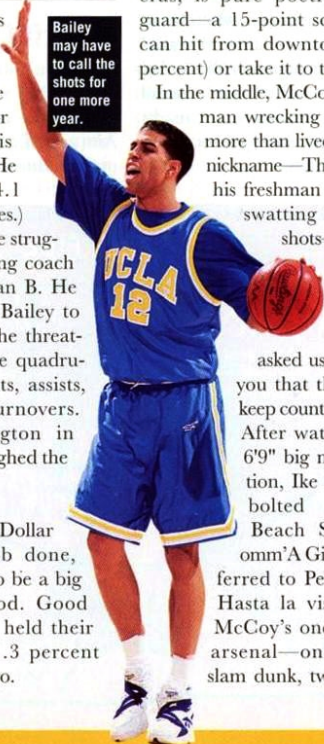
Let's just say if Dollar can't get the job done, defense is going to be a big deal in Westwood. Good thing the Bruins held their opponents to 41.3 percent shooting a year ago.

On the other hand, if Dollar the senior even remotely resembles Dollar the soph—the guy who saved UCLA's bacon in the championship game two years ago, remember?—he feeds a very formidable beast.

Senior forward Charles O'Bannon doesn't measure up to brother Ed just yet, but his numbers are more than respectable: 14.3 points and 6.0 boards a game. Henderson, a 6'9" junior, is Jamaal Wilkes smooth in the four spot, averaging 14.4 points and 7.0 rebounds. And Bailey, when he isn't preening for the cameras, is pure poetry at off-guard—a 15-point scorer who can hit from downtown (39.5 percent) or take it to the rack.

In the middle, McCoy is a one-man wrecking crew who more than lived up to his nickname—The Real—in his freshman season by swatting away 102 shots—a school record. (Note: Bill Walton

asked us to inform you that they didn't keep count in his day.) After watching the 6'9" big man in action, Ike Nwankwo bolted to Long Beach State and omm'A Givens transferred to Pepperdine. Hasta la vista, baby. McCoy's once-limited arsenal—one-handed slam dunk, two-handed



slam dunk—is larger, too, now that he's summered at Pete Newell's Big Man camp.

Johnson, son of UCLA All-American Marques Johnson, shed the Pillsbury Doughboy look a year ago and became the Bruins' most consistent player down the stretch. He started 18 games at off-guard and three more at forward, averaging 12.5 points and 4.4 rebounds. Count on him leaving the bench real quick if any of the starters start to struggle. He chipped in 30 points against Washington last season while replacing Henderson.

After Johnson, Harrick looks at a mighty steep drop-off. Junior Bob Myers is a role player, a heads-up, blue-collar type who fills up space during water breaks. And soph guard Brandon Loyd is a plodding, deadeye shooter who shines against slow-

RECRUITING GRADE

Talk about a washout. First Harrick signed 6'4" guard **Rico Hines** who didn't enroll for academic reasons. Then he got a verbal from 6'1" guard **Baron Davis** who was later seen driving the coach's old car. If the Pac-10 finds any funny business, Harrick may lose some of those scholarships he's been saving for next year too.

footed teams like Princeton.

Now, if only they could learn how to dribble...

LOWDOWN

Charles in Charge

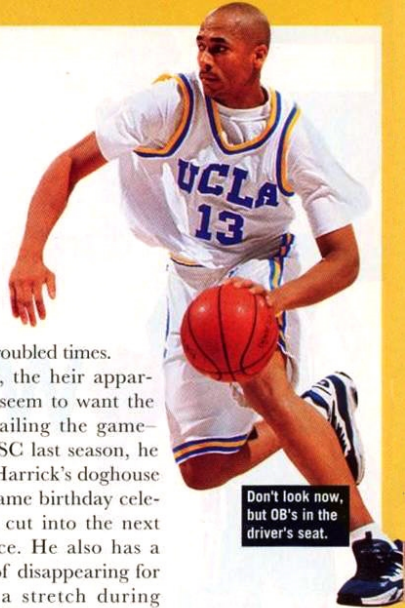
With so many top-flight players, this team could use an air-traffic controller just to manage the egos. Dollar gets first crack if he pulls down quality minutes. If he doesn't,

prepare for troubled times.

O'Bannon, the heir apparent, doesn't seem to want the job. After nailing the game-winner at USC last season, he moved into Harrick's doghouse with a postgame birthday celebration that cut into the next day's practice. He also has a nasty habit of disappearing for minutes at a stretch during games. Of course, that might eliminate Henderson and Bailey, too. And McCoy's still a pup.

That's why Harrick spent the off-season dreaming up ways to graft Ed O'Bannon's leadership skills onto his kid brother. We'll see.

After two straight Pac-10 titles, though, conference banners seem like gumdrops. And given the hordes of underclassmen flocking to the NBA, a fully loaded UCLA won't get many chances like this to win a national title.



Don't look now, but OB's in the driver's seat.

GOOD NEWS

- Pete Carril called it quits at Princeton.
- UCLA was the best shooting team in the country during the regular season (.528).
- Jelani McCoy shot 67.6% from the field, tops in the Pac-10.

BAD NEWS

- The Bruins committed 554 turnovers last season, 118 more than their opponents.
- Assistant coach **Lorenzo Romar**, the team's top recruiter, left to coach Pepperdine.
- UCLA has lost in the first round two of the last three years.

STARTING FIVE

O'BANNON

A double-digit scorer who can run the floor. Could really help the team by learning to take charge in the clutch.

HENDERSON

Team's No. 1 rebounder. No. 2 scorer. No. 3 in steals. No. 4 in assists. And he has yet to reach his potential.

MCCOY

A shot-blocking machine, two offensive moves away from being an NBA first-round draft pick.

BAILEY

He drives, he scores, he rebounds. Trim the errors and he's hard to stop.

DOLLAR

He's healthy now, but can he still dish the ball and hit the jumper?

OFF THE BENCH

JOHNSON (G/F)

Could average 20 points a game as a starter for almost any other team.

MYERS (F)

Smart and tough, he got more minutes as a starter wore on.

LOYD (G)

Maybe he should have considered the Ivy League: his best game was against Princeton.

7 villa



Time for one last go-round with Williams.

We'd love to tell you how freshman phenom

Tim Thomas is faring at Villanova right now, but we haven't heard one word from him yet. Not a peep.

Head coach Steve Lappas is working extra hard these days to protect his top recruit. He won't even let Thomas speak to the press, not until after Midnight Madness. And even then, visiting hours will be limited.

You don't have to venture very far into Philadelphia, though, to get an earful about the hottest prospect to hit college hoops since Stephon Marbury marched through Georgia.

Word has it Lappas' new forward has an NBA body (6'10", 235, muscles galore) and one of the sweetest inside-outside games ever to grace a college court. At Paterson Catholic in New Jersey, he was rated the No. 2 prospect in the nation. No. 1? Kobe Bryant, now an L.A. Laker. When Thomas picked Nova over North Carolina, Seton Hall, and St. John's, he transformed a good team with solid senior leadership into a Final Four contender.

He also helped Wildcat fans forget Kerry Kittles—the school's all-time leading scorer—who will be playing for John Calipari's Nets in the NBA this season. Not to mention Eric Eberz, who will earn a fortune if they ever create a professional H-O-R-S-E circuit.

Lappas has a few details to iron out before we can all kick back and enjoy the Tim Thomas show. But rest assured: he's on the job.

KEY STAT

25

Take your pick. It's the percentage of Wildcat shots taken by NBA rookie Kerry Kittles and the percentage of Wildcat points delivered by Kittles. Time to panic? Not quite. If Tim Thomas doesn't want all 15.8 of Kittles' shots per game, he can serve them up to Jason Lawson and Alvin Williams. They'd be happy to take them off his hands.

now that he has the go-ahead to take more than six shots a game. He nailed 62.1 percent from the floor last season. Lawson's 270 blocked shots are three away from a school record, which means he won't have much company down low at the other end of the court.

Lappas should have no trouble getting the ball to Lawson with point guard Alvin Williams on the floor. The 6'5" senior has yet to flash the scoring skills he displayed in high school, but he's one of the best pure dishers in the Big East Conference, averaging 11 points and 5.4 assists a game. He's also the most promising perimeter threat among the returning players, good on 35 percent from beyond the arc.

And then there's Thomas. He looks like a classic power forward, but his game keeps ticking 15 feet away from the hoop. And his high school numbers from a year ago speak volumes: 29.6 points, 11.5

boards, and 5.0 blocks per outing. Leaving nothing to chance, Lappas hired Thomas' high school coach and cousin, Jim Salmon, to help him adjust to college life. The one big question: how long does Thomas plan to stay? One year is by far the early consensus.

Senior Chuck Kornegay has the body of a blacksmith,

THE PLAYERS

Stray Cat Shuffle

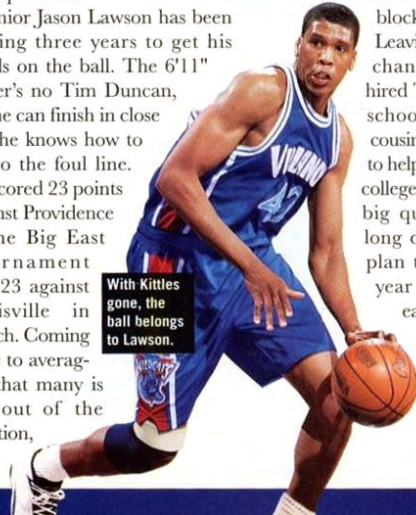
Now that Kittles is gone, the Wildcats need a surefire scorer to push the team past the bumps while Lappas tests out the new wheels in his motion offense.

No problem.

Senior Jason Lawson has been waiting three years to get his hands on the ball. The 6'11" center's no Tim Duncan, but he can finish in close and he knows how to get to the foul line.

He scored 23 points against Providence in the Big East Tournament and 23 against Louisville in March. Coming close to averaging that many is not out of the question,

With Kittles gone, the ball belongs to Lawson.



SCHEDULE

The Wildcats may catch hell from Philadelphia's Big Five for not playing a local round-robin, but it's tough to knock their nonconference schedule. Look for a date with Tulane in the finals of the San Juan Shootout, then a mixer with Duke at home Dec. 14, and a heart-thumper at Kentucky Feb. 9. The good news: only one game each with Big East foes Georgetown and Connecticut.

LAST SEASON
26-7

nova

some serious springs, and a penchant for dominating the offensive boards—three attributes that make him feel right at home in the other forward spot. His bum ankle is healed now, which means he might look more like the player who averaged 8.4 points and 6.3 boards two years back.

In a pinch, Lappas can also turn to spark plug extraordinaire Zeffy Penn, a defensive whiz, or 6'10" frosh Malik Allen, for help up front.

That leaves that one big hole on the outside. With Williams, the Wildcats have six candidates to help them repair a three-point game that accounted for 26 percent of their points a year ago. Sophomores Howard Brown and John Celestand have great athletic skills, but neither could find the bucket from downtown as freshmen (.286 and .256, respectively). And first-year player T.J.

RECRUITING GRADE

Talk about an appetite. First Lappas took Philly. Now he's eating up New Jersey. **Malik Allen** of Medford and **Brian Lynch** of Lincroft give him great depth at forward and guard, and **Tim Thomas** of Paterson may help him pick up a championship before moving on to the NBA. **T.J. Caouette** was Mr. Basketball in Maine.

Caouette has a smooth stroke, but no rep as a lights-out bomber. Lappas is counting on freshman guard Brian Lynch or Thomas to fill the opening on the bomb squad.

When Lawson needs to sit for a spell, look for Rafal Bigus. You'll have no trouble following his game. He's the only 7'1", 270-pound sophomore on the floor who runs around speaking Polish.

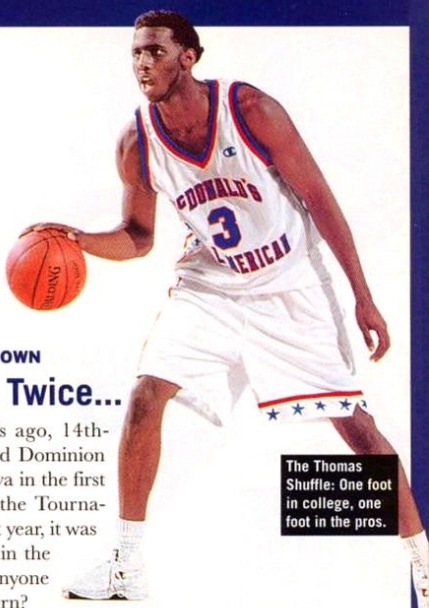
THE LOWDOWN

Once, Twice...

Two years ago, 14th-seeded Old Dominion stung 'Nova in the first round of the Tournament. Last year, it was Louisville in the second. Anyone see a pattern?

This season, the Cats have depth, experience, strength at the crucial point and pivot positions, and a future NBA lottery pick in Thomas. Factor in Lappas' skill in player development and a freshman-to-sophomore talent leap, and the future looks bright.

The big unknown is how much Lappas learned in his first two trips to The Dance as head coach. If he's anything like the seniors on this team, these Cats could be trouble come March.



The Thomas Shuffle: One foot in college, one foot in the pros.

GOOD NEWS

- **Tim Thomas** said yes to **Steve Lappas**, no to **Dean Smith**.
- **Alvin Williams'** assist to turnover ratio is 2.2 to 1.
- The senior class has 71 wins, an NIT crown, a Big East crown, and three NCAA Tournament games on its resumé.

BAD NEWS

- New Jersey Net **Kerry Kittles** was the team's top rebounder.
- **Williams** is the only returning starter who hit a three-pointer last year.
- NBA-bound **Thomas** won't be in Philly long enough to find out who makes the best cheesesteak.

STARTING FIVE

KORNEGAY

Easy to spot under the boards. Look for 240 pounds of muscle on pogo-stick legs.

THOMAS

This year's Stephen Marbury. An NBA game in a student's body.

LAWSON

Solid rebounder, spot-on shooter, and captain of Big East SWAT team.

CELESTAND

Quick and tough, but he'll really help out if he ups his long-range radar.

WILLIAMS

Can dash and dish, but needs to work on putting the ball in the basket.

OFF THE BENCH

BROWN (G)

Looks like a scorer. Acts like a scorer. When do we learn if he is one?

PENN (F)

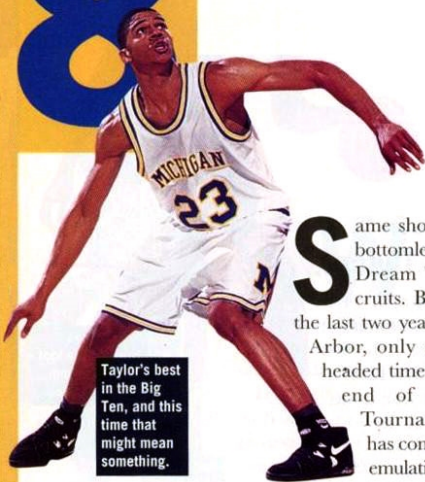
Put it this way: he'd eat the ball if he thought it would help his team win.

ALLEN (F)

Great size. Strong potential. A useful backup in the power spots.

8

mich



Taylor's best in the Big Ten, and this time that might mean something.

Same shorts. Same bottomless pool of Dream Team recruits. But during the last two years in Ann Arbor, only a wrong-headed timeout at the end of another Tournament loss has come close to emulating the on-court exploits of the

fabulous ones who came before. No team's done less with more than these Michigan Wolverines—that loss was the second straight first-round punchout.

Unlike Chris Webber and his posse, this generation of Maize-and-Blueers hasn't walked the walk. Each year, UM's roster bulges with schoolboy studs. Each year, they grade out as ordinary collegians.

Once again, the Wolverines look scary. The addition of juco Brandon Hughes figures to fortify a shaky backcourt. That would mean relief from sagging zones for the talented big men. And that would mean a huge season for prime-timer Maurice Taylor. (Or maybe not—Hughes is a gunner shackled in the role of playmaker.)

If coach Steve Fisher doesn't feel the walls closing in, it's just because he's not used to the sensation. He's enjoyed a Teflon ride since his famed fill-in title run in 1989. But it's time to show he knows what he's doing once the ball's in play.

Man for man, Michigan overwhelms anyone in the Big Ten. In fact, they have few peers anywhere in the land. That's nothing new. Playing to expectations? Now, that would be a change.

KEY STAT

33

How many timeouts the Wolverines think they have each night? They wish. Actually, it's the measly 33 percent Michigan shot from three-point range last year. Only one returning player, Louis Bullock, made more than one in three of his long-range bombs in '95-96 (38.5 percent). Michigan's big guys aren't big enough to overcome the down-low double-teams that their no-shot teammates allow.

nation's top tier. Well, that and a bump in his free-throw shooting (just 59.2 percent). One red flag: the NCAA still wonders how Taylor's grandmother managed to afford that loaded, \$25,000 Ford Explorer her grandson flipped last February.

Taylor's under-22 teammate, soph guard Louis Bullock, has beyond-radar range plus the fighter jock's heart to call for the ball when it matters. When he attacks the rest of his game with the same single-mindedness he devotes to his threes, Bullock becomes a great scorer.

Two all-stars, but the season ebbs and flows with Hughes. The juco All-American is a six-foot blur who spent two years looking exclusively for his own shot at Barton County (Kan.) CC. Now, first priority is making opportunities for his

mates. Anybody else send hard times ahead? Tough junior Travis Conlan did average close to five assists a game last year, but he's not quick enough to lead a title contender. Problem is, he's not smooth enough to play the wing for one, either.

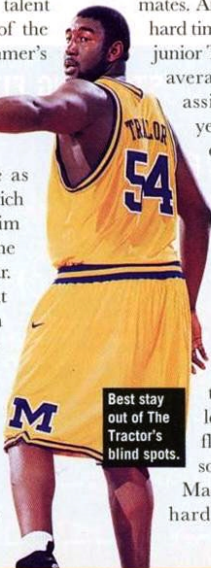
The rest of the eight-man rotation is filled with tremendous athletes who've been flawed ballplayers so far. Undersized Maceo Baston plays hard in the middle,

THE PLAYERS

Taylor-Made

How high do they set the talent bar in Ann Arbor? Two of the 12 members of this summer's national under-22 team spend their winters at Crisler Arena.

So Taylor's not quite as good as he thinks he is, which is NBA caliber. Give him some credit for having the sense to stay one more year. And give him all the credit for his best-in-the-BigTen talent. The 6'9", 250-pound power forward hung the team scoring and rebounding titles on his coat-rack shoulders last year as a soph. Only a sprinkle of nastiness separates him from the



Best stay out of The Tractor's blind spots.

SCHEDULE

The Wolverines sure do schedule as if they plan to be a top-10 team. They host LSU and Arizona, visit Duke and St. John's, and compete in the Rainbow Classic, where some combination of Memphis, Maryland, and Georgia awaits. There's the usual treacherous Big Ten roll call, but get this—only the home game of the two Michigan State matchups counts toward their conference record. Guess 11 teams in a Big Ten Conference creates all kinds of mulligan potential.

LAST SEASON

20-12

igan

grabbing rebounds and blocking shots. And he knows to shoot only when there's paint under his feet (which explains last year's .682 FG percentage). If he'd just learn to keep his hands to himself—Baston fouled out five times last year.

Baston shares the pivot—as if there's room—with The Tractor, Robert Traylor. His broken right arm's healed, and he's trimmed all the way to about 315. Traylor alternates between bowling over foes with his surprising agility and just plain bowling them over. And his free-throw shooting is Shaq-like. Oh, the possibilities...

When soph Albert White gets out on the wing, there are few more exciting players in the Big Ten. But the halfcourt game gives him the shakes. An open look makes him hyperventilate, his ball-handling makes his coaches gasp. At least he's out there every

RECRUITING GRADE

Brandun Hughes was a blue-chip prepster who scored in bushels in high school, and an All-American who scored in bushels in junior college. So why is he the point guard? Oh well—he's quick, aggressive, and the basket's never too far away. The only other newcomer is 6'11" center **Peter Vignier**, a slow project who'll get minutes only when the big guys get in foul trouble.

night. Jerod Ward's first two seasons were blown up by injuries and the burden of expectations spawned by a superstar high school career. In practice, his fluid shooting looks pro-ready; once the game starts, though, it's CBA at best. Still, Ward can be instant offense if his rehabbed knees give him the go-ahead.

LOWDOWN

Silly Us

Four or five guys on this team could be playing against Chris, Juwan, and Jalen some day. As for this year, it's their decision: fill either a role or a personal highlight reel.

There's no guarantee the laissez-faire Fisher can get his crew to make the right choice. But he definitely has a vested interest in trying. A third straight year of underachieving could kill off all that hard-won momentum generated by the Fab Five. Yikes! A hard time recruiting? Now, that prospect might be just the prodigious Fisher needs.

Our better basketball judgment tells us that picking this team to accomplish anything on a grand scale is just this side of ridiculous. Hey, we're reckless. Go Blue.



That's right—Bullock can score from his knees.

GOOD NEWS

- The Wolverines have averaged more than 23 wins the last five seasons.
- Michigan outrebounded foes by an average of 4.3 a game last year.
- Louis Bullock is the Big Ten's second-leading returning foul shooter.

BAD NEWS

- Those two straight first-round Tourney losses were to lower-seeded teams.
- Willie Mitchell is the fifth UM player to transfer in the last three years.
- The Wolverines shot just 44.2% from the floor and 67.2% from the line.

STARTING FIVE

TAYLOR

Has all the skills to be a standout and one more year to sharpen them.

CONLAN

Steady swingman dribbles like a guard, but 32.6% shooting won't cut it.

BASTON

Does the tough stuff when he's on the floor. If he's on enough, he could be All-Big Ten.

BULLOCK

Took more treys than any two teammates; made more than any three.

HUGHES

Okay, so he can score (28.2 ppg last year in JC). That's not why he's here.

OFF THE BENCH

WHITE (G/F)

Gifted athlete with a big body. Loves the open court, but not tight spots.

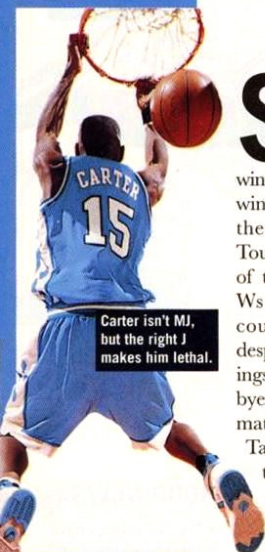
WARD (G/F)

Don't panic, Jerod—there's still time to show us those high school antics were for real.

TRAYLOR (C)

Hey, run around someone once in a while, big guy.

9 north c



Carter isn't MJ, but the right J makes him lethal.

Sometime before the regular season shuts down, the North Carolina Tar Heels will get their 20th win. It's in the manual. "Tar Heels win 20," right? There after "Take the points vs. Syracuse in the Tournament"—okay, just ahead of that one. Add a couple more Ws in the ACC tourney, and a couple more at the Dance—despite some poor recent showings, the Heels still have earned a bye into the Sweet 16. Do the math. Give or take a game, the Tar Heels will be swaggering into the Final Four right about the time they nail down win No. 26.

And that's the one that makes Dean Smith the winningest coach in Division I history.

Talk about your grand gestures.

Granted, the dramatic possibilities would be significantly diminished had it not been for all the unmet expectations at UNC since the Fab Five ran out of timeouts against them in the 1993 NCAA Finals. Smith breaks record vs. Bethune-Cookman? Big deal. Nor would the storyline be what it is if the team weren't back to its old self. This may not be Deano's best crew, but it's far deeper than the last two he's had.

And they're not called *UNC* for nothing. They come from far and wide to play for Michelangelo: Germany, The Netherlands, Senegal, Bulgaria, even Bogota (New Jersey).

So, get your interviews early. This spring, things could get downright Ripkenesque around Chapel Hill.

KEY STAT

-25

Say what you will about Calabria and McInnis, but they finished in the ACC's top 10 in turnover differential—and none of this year's projected starters did. Carter, Jamison, Okulaja, Williams, and Zwikker combined for 230 assists and 255 turnovers last year. You won't find too many Final Four teams with a minus 25 turnover differential.

smoother. Next up is freshman Ed Cota, who lives to play defense and pass the rock, a combination that will make him a starter sooner rather than later.

Dante Calabria was a nice player, but if his name were John and he looked like a sportswriter, you'd have already forgotten his game. In his place goes Vince Carter, who has the chance to be a poster boy for all the right reasons. He's a flier who learned to play some D last year—and that leaves him just a jump shot away from being lethal.

Although Carter was the next Michael Jordan before he even took his first dribble in the Deandome, last season's best newcomer turned out to be forward Antawn Jamison. His flypaper hands, ready-for-lift-off legs, and no-trash demeanor made him first-team All-ACC as a freshman. Jamison's the inside force Smith hasn't had in a while.

His up-front partner is Ademola Okulaja, the Nigerian-born/German-bred forward who was the surprise of the ACC last year. He came in as an afterthought frosh, but he was a starter by season's end. Okulaja can shoot the three (just a dip under 49 percent) and, like everyone else here, he shuts down his opposite number.

Dutchman Serge Zwikker, another returnee, is still an in-progress seven-footer (okay, 7'2"), but players around the conference are finally figuring out

THE PLAYERS

Well-Heeled

The starting backcourt is gone, Smith's talking about going with a 5'11" walk-on at point guard, and this team is deeper than a year ago? Well, yeah.

Jeff McInnis was the team's leading scorer from the point last season. But this team is better off without his spin dribble to nowhere. The walk-on getting lip service is senior Webb Tyndall—who played in all of eight games last year. We're not buying it. It's junior Shammond Williams' job to lose. He can score some—8.3 points off the bench—but his ball-handling needs to get a lot



Jamison comes to play in the paint.

SCHEDULE

No easy slide here. The Tar Heels play their usual assortment of tough nonleaguers (the Tipoff Classic vs. Arizona; then LSU, UMass, Princeton). And they're in Chapel Hill only three times in the six weeks before the conference schedule begins. At least they'll be road-tough by then. Big showdowns begin and end the conference slate: at Wake on Jan. 4, and Duke at the Deandome on March 2.

LAST SEASON

21-11

Carolina

that he's harder to push around than he looks. Even if they start paying him more mind, a quiet double-double season is not out of the question.

What makes this team so much stronger than last year's is all the new blood. Cota is only one of a handful of first-timers. Bulgarian frosh Vasco Evtimov has a smooth but strong Eastern European game that will get him noticed before long. Terrence Newby is a home-grown backcourt star just waiting to show off his moves. For good measure, toss in returning sophomore swingman Ryan Sullivan (Bogota, N.J.).

Scout-mastering duties fall to well-traveled Makhtar Ndiaye, who started his career at Wake and Michigan before settling in at UNC. The big-bodied big man from Senegal will set the right don't-even-think-about-it exam-

RECRUITING GRADE

The Heels needed a point guard and a big man and got both: Ed Cota and Vasco (formerly Vassil) Evtimov. G Terrence Newby also gets some time. Michael Brooker would have, too, but he blew out a knee. It may not be Wallace-Stackhouse-McInnis vintage, but another Carter-Jamison-Okulaja class is a distinct possibility.

ple. Whomever he lines up against will spend the next day in the trainer's room.

LOWDOWN

Gold Watch & Ring

Look, the guy can't coach forever. He's pushing the mandatory retirement age, for Pete's sake. So maybe the game has passed him by. Maybe he no longer has the passion.

Tell you one thing: he's got the players. After two depth-shy, speed-challenged teams, UNC boasts one of the nation's few legitimate eight-man rotations. And that means relentless waves of pressure D and a more up-tempo game are back.

Dean may actually have some fun with this team. The younger guys are a year older and pre-pressure-cooked. Yes, there's no real star here yet, but that suits Smith just fine. And if one or two should emerge—and Jamison and Carter have that step-up look—that's okay too.

This team may not be the best in the state, which is no small matter. It's the Tar Heel State, after all. But in North Carolina, No. 2 is often still playing when everyone else has gone home.

Teams had their chance to mess around with the Heels. But that window has closed.

Zwikker is quicker—and tougher—than he looks.



GOOD NEWS

- The Heels have won at least 21 games 26 seasons in a row.
- Antawn Jamison averaged a double-double (15.8 points, 10.1 rebounds) against the ACC's big boys.
- Rumor has it that banger Makhtar Ndiaye has developed a mid-range game.

BAD NEWS

- Two of the last three Sweet 16s didn't include UNC.
- New pointman Shammond Williams had 57 turnovers in limited action last year.
- The Heels made only 67% of their free throws.

STARTING FIVE

OKULAJA

Speaks German and basketball fluently. Tar Heels' ace in the hole is an excellent passer, underrated scorer.

JAMISON

Cat-quick leaping ability means no one in the country rebounds better.

ZWIKKER

Plays within his limitations, which are significantly less limiting than they might appear.

CARTER

Hey, MJ didn't have a great first year either. But one more subpar season and he's college hoops' Ron Powlis.

WILLIAMS

He can shoot, but can he handle? If he can, watch out. If he can't, ditto.

OFF THE BENCH

NDIAYE (F/C)

Pronounced Jie, as in pie, but there's nothing sweet about this guy down low.

EVTIMOV (F)

He shoots, passes, runs, and rebounds. A little defense and he's a keeper.

COTA (G)

Likes to defend and dish, just the qualities Smith loves in a point guard.



It'll take more than gravity to keep Newton down this year.

SCHEDULE

This schedule looks a lot like the one that was one of the 10 toughest in the nation last year. There are early jousts in the preseason NIT—**St. Joseph's** at home, with **Indiana** and/or **UCLA** looming down the road. It doesn't get much easier in December, when **Michigan** comes to **Cameron** and **Duke** goes to **Philly** to play **Villanova**. The other serious nonconference test comes in February, with a trip to **UCLA**. And the **ACC** is, well, the **ACC**.

Coach K is not God. Would the Almighty sit one out with a bad back? What's more, the coach's fallibility was proved when his return to the sideline didn't immediately translate into another Final Four banner.

Still, when Mike Krzyzewski sets himself a task, bet that he will make it so.

Last year, he set out to create a "bridge" from those juggernaut days of yore (okay, late '80s, early '90s), straight through that disastrous 13-18 season he watched mostly from home, to a new era of glory. So it's not creating the heavens and the Earth; in college basketball, it's still no mean feat.

Done. Sort of. Coach K's inexperienced, injury-riddled Blue Devils bounced back to 18 wins before they—if you can call five healthy scholarship players "they"—were bounced out of the NCAA Tournament in the first round by Eastern Michigan.

Six days. Two years. However long it takes. The world as the Cameron cultists know it needs but a few finishing touches to be whole again. A quartet of starters and a pair of top reserves return. So does the most-likely-to-succeed freshman of '94, who sat out all last year with a bad knee. Maybe all the pieces aren't yet in place—there's still no Hurleyish point guard. Maybe there are too many guys lining up in the same spot. At least, they all play it well.

Coach K looks at this group and sees that it is good.

KEY STAT

43.7

D for Duke, **D** for defense. Just five teams shot 50 percent from the floor against the Blue Devils last season. Four of them were winners. All told, Duke opponents averaged 43.7 percent from the floor. UCLA, the best shooting team in the nation, hit just 42.9 percent, 13 points under its average. Now if Coach K's men could manage better than 44.5 percent themselves...

THE PLAYERS

One Size Fits All

Anybody who calls Tim Duncan "soft" and "babylike" had best be graduating or possessing a game. Playing against type, senior Greg Newton actually is the latter. The center got pushed around early last year, but his season turned shortly after he mouthed off at the head Deacon: he held his own in their rematch (20 points, nine rebounds) and finished with double-doubles in four of his last six games. An undersized Newton saw little action in his first two seasons. This year's bulked-up model might just be the ACC's No. 2 big man.

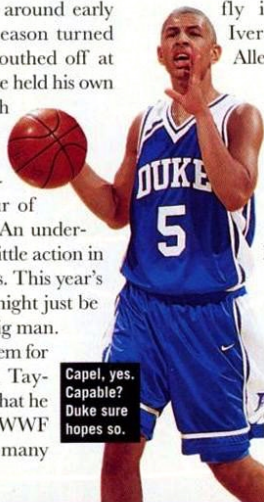
Bulk's not a problem for 6'10", 240-pound Taymon Domzalski. What he does with it is. His WWF abandon drew so many

whistles, they were calling him "Dumbfoulski" by season's end. But he's a solid rebounder with a surprisingly sweet touch (a team-leading 81.8 percent from the free-throw line). If he keeps it under control, the Blue Devils have a solid low-post pair.

Everyone else is one-size-fits-all. Junior Ricky Price, an explosive scorer, is the first option with the game on the line. Price hit two big last-second shots on the road and missed a third. And he's a defensive stopper in training.

Senior Jeff Capel's another talented scorer, but face it, he plays nothing like the coach's son he is (Capel Sr. is head man at Old Dominion). Capel's 16.6 points a game led the team, but he entered last year as a 46 percent shooter from downtown, then hit just one-third of his 221 attempts. Can you say bad shot selection? Worse, he took 160 more shots than any other Dookie. That might fly if you're Allen Iverson. Capel's not Allen Iverson.

Trajan Langdon is another natural wing, but if the budding star is fully recovered from the knee problem that sidelined him all of last year—he's ahead of schedule heading into the preseason—he might flip spots with Capel. His shooting (43 percent from



Capel, yes. Capable? Duke sure hopes so.



ke

downtown as a freshman) and steady ball-handling (just 38 turnovers) are a natural fit at the point. If neither can fill the role, Krzyzewski's forced to go with 5'11" junior Steve Wojciechowski. Wojo's a spark plug off the bench. But that's as far as it goes.

Senior Carmen Wallace was on the verge before he too went down with a knee injury. He's one more six-feet-and-change guy with a perimeter game. Ditto top recruit Nate James—although he has been spotted taking it to the hole.

On this team, the 6'8" Roshown McLeod is a post player. The first transfer of Coach K's reign was mediocre in two seasons at St. John's. Still, he impressed his new teammates in practice last season. He'll put one of the big men on the bench when the coach opts for a smaller lineup. But big surprise: he's got swingman instincts.

RECRUITING GRADE

Mike Krzyzewski missed his first three targets, but landed a trio of top-50 prospects anyway. Nate James, a ferocious inside-outside forward, is good enough to start. Mike Chappell is a graceful perimeter player. Chris Carrawell was a top-10 talent until a shoulder injury ruined his senior year. He's healthy and looking good again. All three will see time. Too bad they all play the same already-overcrowded wing spot.

LOWDOWN

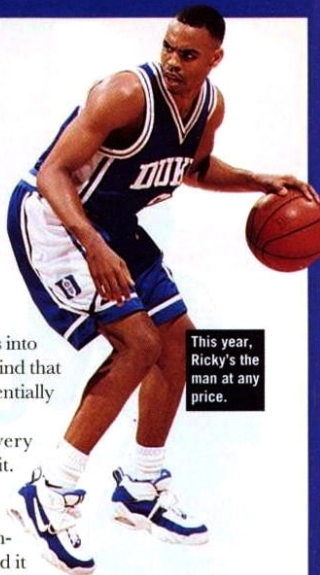
Devil Is Due

Too many interchangeable parts? Could be. But could be it's just enough of a good thing. Sure, some nights will offer unsolvable matchup problems. A lot of other nights will end with the Blue Devils

driving their opponents into the ground. Keep in mind that the coach uses an essentially positionless system.

This team has a very defensive look about it. They stifled teams in flashes a year ago, but now they have the manpower to sustain it. And it doesn't hurt one bit that so many experienced firstliners are back to run Coach K's schemes.

Think back to Duke's title teams—Hurley, Christian Laettner, and a bunch of midsized guys filling the lanes and bringing the defensive heat. Okay, one of those guys was Grant Hill, and there's no Hurley or Laettner here now. Fair enough. But give Coach K a superstar or two, he'll get you a title or two. Give him a bunch of talented, hungry athletes, he'll get you a top-10 team.



This year, Ricky's the man at any price.

GOOD NEWS

- Coach K is in for the long haul: he signed a seven-year deal after last season.
- Greg Newton has added a bunch more muscle in the weight room.
- Opponents turned the ball over 78 more times than the Blue Devils did.

BAD NEWS

- The much-maligned Chris Collins will be missed more than you think.
- Last season, the Blue Devils blew four double-figure leads in the second half.
- Taymon Domzalski was called for 111 personal fouls, nearly four a game.

STARTING FIVE

PRICE

The quickest first step in the ACC, sometimes too quick (87 turnovers).

DOMZALSKI

Foul-prone bruiser needs to figure out how to stay on the floor.

NEWTON

Aggressive, antagonistic big man proves that white men can jump.

LANGDON

The team's smartest, coolest player. Has the most reliable shooting touch.

CAPEL

Unbelievable range doesn't always mesh with unbelievably bad judgment.

OFF THE BENCH

MCLEOD (F)

Left St. John's so he could show off his perimeter skills, but they need him down low here.

JAMES (F)

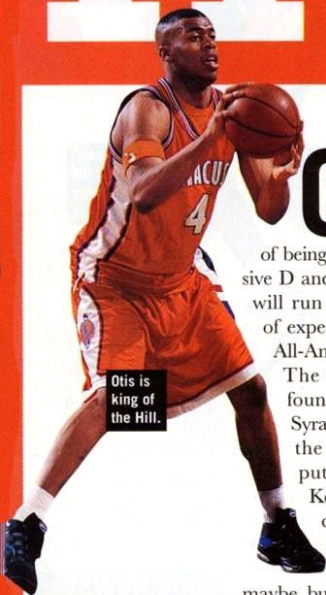
Strong inside game, surprising three-point shooter, and check out that go-to attitude.

WOJCIECHOWSKI (G)

Pugnacious playmaker gives all he has, which, unfortunately, isn't enough.

11

syracuse



It is
king of
the Hill.

SCHEDULE

The opener's **Winthrop**, but then SU goes to the Great Alaska Shootout, where two NCAA Tournament teams await the outcome of a Syracuse-Kentucky rematch. After that, all they need to do is get through the Big East gauntlet, plus play **UNLV** at home and **Alabama** away.



Coach Jim Boeheim enters his 21st season laughing, for a change, instead of being laughed at. His aggressive D and get-it-up-the-floor O will run on a high-test blend of experience and a parade of All-Americans.

The experts were dumb-founded last spring when Syracuse played its way into the NCAA Finals, then put a big scare into the Kentucky Wildcats in the championship game. Now the Orangemen are back, depleted maybe, but replenished, too, and no one's snickering anymore.

The team goes this year without John Wallace and Lazarus Sims, who took off with a third of the Orangemen's scoring and rebounds and half their assists.

No problem. (No fooling!) Center Otis Hill is out from under Wallace's shadow, forward Todd Burgan is ready to bust out shooting rainbows, and guard Jason Cipolla is out of Boeheim's doghouse. And then there are the freshmen, two of whom will start.

After their postseason in the spotlight, one thing is certain for the Orangemen: even with newfound respect, they'll have a Big East scrap on their hands.

THE PLAYERS

Gotta Have Hart

Hill shot 57 percent to lead the Big East last season and then shot 64 percent in the Tournament, where he also was among the leaders in

KEY STAT

24

Entering his 21st season, Jim Boeheim is averaging more than 24 wins a year, including 19 of 20 or more. Syracuse has also won at least 10 regular-season Big East games in each of the last 11 years—the longest streak in conference history. That's R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

floor burns and defensive harassment. That kind of step-up is essential this season, as everybody's buddy becomes a leader of a young team.

Cipolla's timely shooting had crowds going nuts late last season. That more than made up for his tendency to play mano a mano defense like a matador, which had Boeheim going nuts most of the year. Cipolla has to improve in both areas to help make up for the loss of Wallace/Sims as well as to hold off a possible charge by coveted freshman Ramel Lloyd.

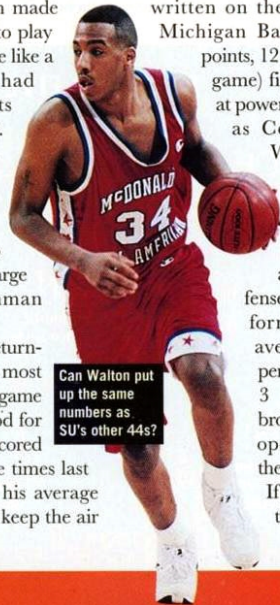
Burgan, the third returning starter, made the most of his 34 minutes per game and figures to be good for more as a junior. He scored 17 or better just nine times last year; that could be his average this season if he can keep the air

under his three-pointers and out of his shot description. Again, the Wallace/Sims contribution has to be replaced somewhere.

Jason Hart was one of the handful of top point guards recruited by Syracuse, and the job is his. That may be a tall order given this year's expectations, but look around—the talent is younger and better than ever at this level. And this freshman is one of the best.

While the 6'2" Hart was the complete package at Inglewood (Calif.) High, Winfred Walton was a complete load. He's 6'10", 240 pounds, and comes from the same mold as Derrick Coleman and John Wallace. He overcame arthroscopic knee surgery during his junior year. Winfred—he likes being called Fred—has a five-inch-long dagger tattoo on his bicep with the word "Weapon" written on the blade. Mr. Michigan Basketball (27 points, 12 rebounds per game) figures to start at power forward, just as Coleman and Wallace did as freshmen.

This group can be offensive, and on defense, it presents a formidable 6'6" average on the perimeter of a 2-3 zone that broke hearts and opened eyes in the Tournament. If Cipolla takes the cape out of



Can Walton put up the same numbers as SU's other 44s?

cuse

his hands and puts it on his back, Syracuse can run its man-to-man to Boeheim's content.

Also in this simmering stew that may take some time to firm up are two Europeans, Marius Janulis and Elvir Ovcina, who spent last year toughening up, and three more freshmen, any of whom could be a factor.

Tulsa's Derrick Thomas is a bulky middleman who could shove Ovcina aside, and Lasean Howard, stockpiled in prep school last year, could jump ahead of Janulis, who started 14 games when Cipolla was hurt. Lloyd averaged 25 points as an All-New York City pick.

There are a lot of moving parts in this young, athletic bunch. If Hart needs time, Cipolla could move to the point, Burgan to two guard, Lloyd to the wing. If Hill moves to forward for a spell, Ovcina

RECRUITING GRADE

With five freshmen—Winfred Walton, Jason Hart, Derrick Thomas, Lasean Howard, and Ramel Lloyd—Boeheim has five positions filled for the future—and two now. Walton starts at power forward. It's up to Hart to come to the point more decisively than he did earlier this year, when he tried to renege on his commitment.

or Thomas drop into the middle.

The talent's as deep as it's been on the Hill in quite a while. And since no established player is in immediate jeopardy of losing his job and each new man can carve his own niche, chemistry, so crucial in last year's stretch run, could be easy to find.

So all that's needed is the stability that saw the Orange win 15 of its last 18 games last year.

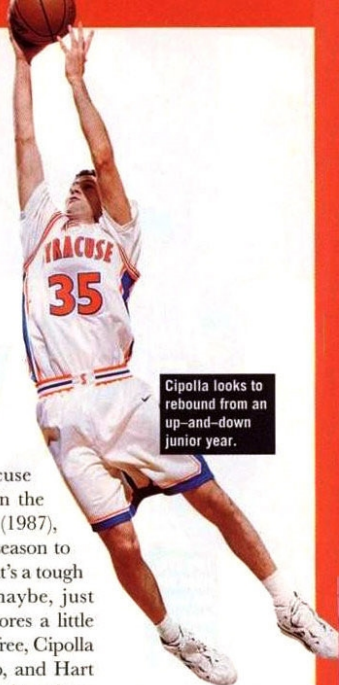
LOWDOWN

Freshman Strength

The last time Syracuse lost the final game in the NCAA Tournament (1987), it returned the next season to win the Big East. That's a tough act to follow, but maybe, just maybe, if Burgan scores a little more, Hill stays foul-free, Cipolla and Lloyd light it up, and Hart and Walton are as good as advertised, then history can repeat itself. Half the scholarship players may be freshmen—but they're fresh, and they're men. Boeheim teams typically spread the wealth and play serious defense, and there's no place like Dome.

This much is certain: they'll be fun to watch from every seat except the other bench.

Cipolla looks to rebound from an up-and-down junior year.



GOOD NEWS

- Four returners shot better than 42%—and Jason Cipolla can, too.
- Otis Hill, Todd Burgan, and Cipolla can revive great basketball through chemistry.
- Jason Hart tried to back out of his commitment but finally arrived.

BAD NEWS

- Hart is the fourth point guard in four years and the first frosh.
- With five returnees, the bench has to be good and ready.
- Cipolla shot only 31% from beyond the arc.

STARTING FIVE

WALTON

They handed him No. 44—property of Derrick Coleman and John Wallace.

BURGAN

This year's go-to guy from the perimeter led the team in steals.

HILL

Emerged as an athletic banger in NCAAAs. Doesn't know meaning of quit.

CIPOLLA

Mercurial, but hit the key shots last year. Has to hit more this season.

HART

A lot will be asked of 6'2" freshman, who looks like he has plenty of answers.

OFF THE BENCH

LLOYD (G)

Chiseled 6'4", 225 pounds. "Rock" will push for starting job right away.

JANULIS (G/F)

Lithuanian averaged 8.0 points in 14 starts. Not the quickest, but the smartest.

OVCINA (C/F)

Typical Europasser who, at 6'11", can fill any frontcourt position.

12

arkana



This year, Hood puts the top down and goes to the hole.



SCHEDULE

A year ago, Richardson toughened up his untested piglets with a slaughterhouse pre-SEC slate. This year, they get to laze in the slop a little. No preseason NIT or Great Eight—just an uneventful November and December with a couple of challenges vs. Missouri and Louisville. There's a pretty serious hump in January, though: at Cincinnati followed by home dates against Final Four entry Mississippi State and national champion Kentucky.



When you're a really big cheese, the rats start to nibbling. Just ask Arkansas coach Nolan Richardson.

Last year, a nasty little one-two punch—draft and graduation—wiped Richardson's national runner-up roster clean. No matter: he bussed in nine new recruits and guided them to the Sweet 16. Bet he didn't anticipate going the complete makeover route again so soon.

It all started in February, when the NCAA ruled the Hogs' leading scorer (Jesse Pate) and top rebounder (Sunday Adebayo), both first-year guys, would never again fly the colors. Seems a hometown administrator had been a little too eager to approve the eligibility of the JC transfers.

Then in the off-season, big man Darnell Robinson left for the NBA...forward Nick Davis was declared academically ineligible for the first semester...starting point guard Kareem Reid and off-guard Marlon Towns were suspended indefinitely even after pot possession charges against them were dropped...Towns quit school...and prime-time freshman Glendon Alexander was forced to sue the NCAA, the SEC, and the university for his eligibility in a dispute over an advanced reading course he took in high school.

Net loss—four definites, one maybe, two probably not.

Once again, it doesn't matter. As long as the Head Hog has bodies to fill his jerseys, he'll win. And he still has enough holdovers from

KEY STAT

80

These Hogs are one of the oldest young teams in the nation. The first-year players from last year who are back again this season (four freshmen and a soph) started 80 games between them. So now, even with three sophs in the starting lineup, this team is still more ready than yours. And deep and experienced isn't a bad way to be in March.

1995's A+ recruiting class to get the job done. This is one hunk of cheese that's going to bite back.

THE PLAYERS

Problem-Solving

Let's take it from the top.

The Hogs didn't exactly gnaw on backboard glass before Adebayo was sent packing, so who'll do the down-low-and-dirty heavy lifting now? Forward Derek Hood, whose 6.1 rebounds per were best among SEC freshmen last season, is first in line.

After all, he did grab at least eight boards in five of the last seven games. And here's something you don't hear often about a college ballplayer: he could be a

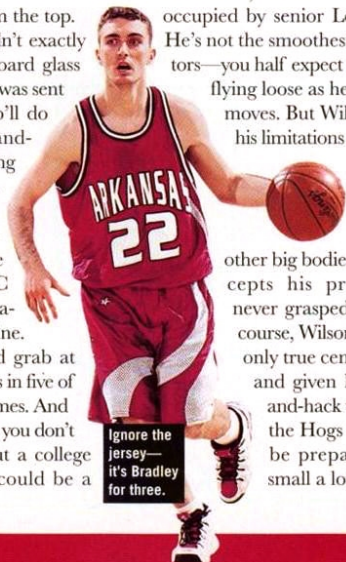
dominant small forward, too, if only he expended as much energy on the offensive end as he does in the shadow of the defensive basket.

Scoring? That's sophomore Pat Bradley's job. At first, he seemed an odd fit for the Arkansas system: a tippy-toe jump shooter in a 40 Minutes of Hell dungeon. But he was the only Hog who lived large from long range (41.4 percent). Watch him scrape defenders off mazes of screens, and try not to think of Steve Alford.

Bradley needs to get scoring backup from Landis Williams: last year's sixth man looks like this year's small forward. The coach says the junior is the best athlete on the team. One thing's for sure: among this group of sprinters, Williams is the anchor leg. If he can just fill the basket like he fills the lanes...

As for the hole in the middle left by Robinson, it's really more like a pivot, one that will be amply occupied by senior Lee Wilson. He's not the smoothest of operators—you half expect to see bolts flying loose as he makes his moves. But Wilson knows his limitations and knows

how to use his big body to move other big bodies, two concepts his predecessor never grasped at all. Of course, Wilson's now the only true center here—and given his smack-and-hack tendencies, the Hogs had better be prepared to go small a lot.



Ignore the jersey—it's Bradley for three.

nsas

Who's going to run the show? After a little lesson-teaching benchtime, it'll be Reid again. As a freshman, his 1,117 minutes were most on the team, no small matter for such a small guy. And his school-record 219 dishes show he's one of those increasingly rare point guards who's in touch with his priorities.

No Texas schoolboy ever finished his career with more points than Alexander. Once he's cleared to play—and he will be—he'll chip in a little instant offense. Ditto transfer Tarik Wallace, who managed 23.4 points at Shorter (Little Rock) JC last year. Granted, high school and juco scoring totals don't always mean much, but it certainly looks as if Richardson has some serious punch on the bench. And soph Ali Thompson is the typical midsize Richardson model, one more guy who'll run 'til he drops. All of which means

RECRUITING GRADE

Now that it seems likely that **Glendon Alexander** will get to lace 'em up, he'll be the big-time shooter the Razorbacks desperately need. If he needs time to adjust to the spotlight, the Hogs turn to juco transfer **Tarik Wallace** for firepower off the bench. Last-minute signee **Steve Green** is a quiet scorer. Maybe too quiet.

that if he can get eligible, Davis had better put some calluses on his baby-soft game or he's going to get them on his butt.

LOWDOWN

High on the Hogs

Send Nolan Richardson all the dressing tips you want. But don't think for one minute that anyone can teach him a thing about coach-

ing. Last year, he took a dead raw crew that couldn't shoot or rebound a lick to the Sweet 16. This year, they still won't rebound much, but with some new shooters in the pen, they won't have to. And last year's recruits are this year's seasoned vets.

It's true that, depending on how all the suspensions and hearings shake out, the Razorbacks could be starting the season significantly undermanned. So it's possible that they won't exactly come firing out of the gate. Not to worry: they'll be back in stride by late January—as usual. And they'll be blowing full-force by March—as usual. Even at less than full strength, the Hogs have a cakewalk in the mediocre SEC Western Division this year. But the fun begins afterward. And at full strength, with Nolan at the head, that could mean one rousing good time.



Reid it and weep. Kareem takes foes to school.

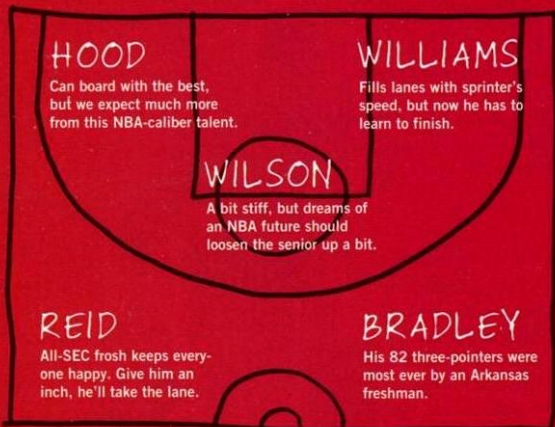
GOOD NEWS

- Arkansas has more wins (195) in the 1990s than any other team in college basketball.
- Point guard **Kareem Reid** was second in the SEC in assists (6.6) and steals (2.0).
- The Hogs averaged just under three fewer turnovers a game than their opponents.

BAD NEWS

- The Hogs' field goal percentage (.442) and three-point mark (.324) were lowest in school history.
- Their free-throw percentage (.624) wasn't—but it was last in the SEC.
- Academic adviser **Kim Wood**, daughter of the school chancellor, resigned after admitting to typing papers for Jesse Pate.

STARTING FIVE



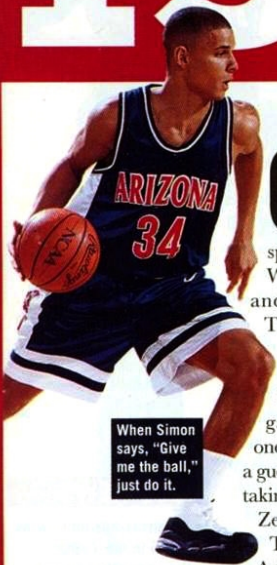
OFF THE BENCH

THOMPSON (F)
Too good not to play. Good thing, because he's going to have to.

ALEXANDER (G)
Freshman two guard brings big-time size (6'5", 205) and big-time range.

WALLACE (G)
Juco transfer wants the rock. Think three-pointers—and plenty of them.

13 ariz



When Simon says, "Give me the ball," just do it.

Call it a metaphor for the future of college basketball. Last season, five seniors spearheaded Lute Olson's Wildcats to a 26-7 record and the NCAA Sweet 16. That quintet—Reggie Geary, Joseph Blair, Joe McLean, Corey Williams, and Ben Davis—is gone, as are 513 games of experience and one Final Four. Care to hazard a guess at the number of seniors taking their place this year?

Zero, as in not a single one.

That's a first for Olson at Arizona, but almost certainly not his last.

SCHEDULE

As if the Pac-10 schedule weren't tough enough, the Cats face five Top 25 clubs before Christmas. Among the monsters: **North Carolina** in the Hall of Fame Classic; **Michigan** at the Palace of Auburn Hills; **New Mexico** in the Pit; **Utah** in Salt Lake City. At least their tussle with **Texas** is at the McKale Center. Would you treat your kids this way?

The drop-off doesn't end there. Of the three juniors on the squad, only guard Miles Simon and swingman Michael Dickerson play significant roles. This season's Wildcats are so young that nap time may become part of Lute's practice schedule.

Not surprisingly, there's nary a starting or reserve spot that's not up for grabs, except at shooting guard, where Simon is the incumbent. All that uncertainty might rattle another coach, but not the imperturbable Olson. Now in his 14th season in Tucson, Lute's strolled down this street before. He's a master at handling teams stocked with no-names and kids. Especially kids like this group: Arizona's recruiting class is rated among the country's top five.

Despite all the young talent—or because it's so young—the Wildcats look to be a notch behind UCLA in the Pac-10 race. But what this bunch lacks in experience

KEY STAT

13

An unlucky number? Not for **Michael Dickerson**. Indeed, as **Dickerson** went, so went **Arizona**. Last year's Wildcats were 14-1 when **Dickerson** scored 13 or more points. When he didn't, they were 12-6. **Arizona's** only loss when **Dickerson** hit the magic number came in the West Region final against **Kansas**.

it makes up for in athleticism.

Olson will have to juggle his lineup early against a heavyweight nonconference schedule that includes North Carolina, Michigan, and Texas. "A good thing about the schedule," Olson says, "is that once we get into league play, it's not going to be the case where the guys look down the line and are in awe of who they're going to play."

Indeed, if Arizona's non-league death march doesn't break them, and if Olson finds a lineup that clicks, it's the opposition who should watch out.

THE PLAYERS

Thin Men

The Arizona frontline gives new meaning to the term downsizing. The beefiest guy on the roster, sophomore Donnell Harris, tips

the scales at 214. Hunky for some guys, but not for a 6'11" center. A.J. Bramlett, another 6'11" sophomore who starts at center, spent the summer "bulking up" to a whopping...205. For the Wildcats to excel, both Bramlett and Harris must come up, er, big. Both are mobile, prime-time shot-blockers whom Olson plans to play together.

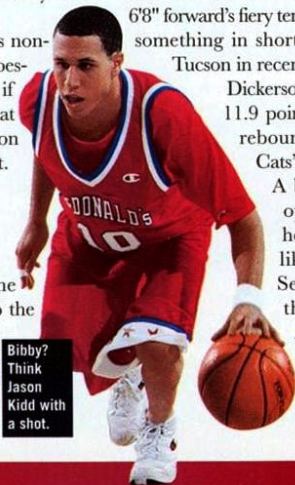
What the Cats lack in heft they make up for in young talent. Juco transfer Bennett Davison (19 points, 15 boards per game), who has the inside track at power forward, runs the floor well and lives to attack the glass. He'll be pushed by top-50 freshman Gene Edgerson.

Edgerson has a chance to become a big-time performer from the git-go. Comfortable at either forward slot, he led St. Augustine High in New Orleans to the mythical national high school title as a junior and to the state tournament final last season.

Edgerson is terrific in the open court and a ferocious rebounder. But what Olson loves most is the 6'8" forward's fiery temperament, something in short supply in Tucson in recent years.

Dickerson averaged 11.9 points and 3.5 rebounds as the Cats' sixth man.

A blur in the open court, he has been likened to Sean Elliott, the former Arizona All-American. That's a stretch,



Bibby? Think Jason Kidd with a shot.



ona

but his explosive first step allows Dickerson to blow by defenders. As a starter at small forward, though, he'll have to improve on his perimeter shooting.

Same for Simon, the Wildcats' top returning scorer (13.2), who shot just 32 percent from three-point range last season—not good enough, even if one of his bombs was a 65-foot Hail Mary buzzer-beater that gave Arizona a 79-76 victory over Cincinnati. Simon's stock in trade is taking the ball to the rack and breaking down the defense. He'll be called on to do even more of it this season.

Making sure Simon gets his touches is all-world freshman playmaker Mike Bibby, son of former UCLA and NBA star Henry Bibby. The top high school point guard in the country, the 6'2" dervish is the most heralded Wildcat recruit since Elliott. Like

RECRUITING GRADE

Lute Olson corralled everything but a massive pivot man. **Mike Bibby** set Arizona's career high school scoring record (3,002 points). Forward **Bennett Davison** was the best juco big man in the country. Forward **Gene Edgerson** was the top high school player in Louisiana. Guard **Quynn Tebbbs**, an all-state performer in Utah, begins his college career after a two-year Mormon mission in Brazil. Iowa's Mr. Basketball, **Justin Wessel**, is a 6'8" scoring machine.

Elliott, Bibby's an in-state kid who stayed home. Like Elliott, Bibby dominated his competition: Player of the Year in Arizona three times. And like Elliott, Bibby can drain the long-range jumper.

Olson says Bibby's destined for greatness. How quickly he begins

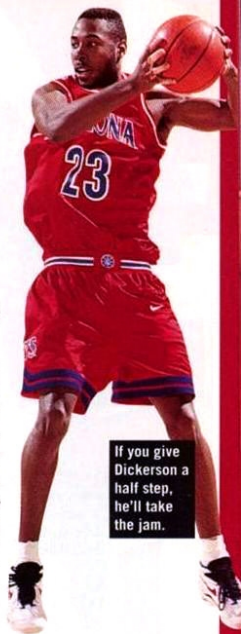
to achieve it depends on how happy he keeps his teammates.

Sophomore gunner Jason Terry spelled both Geary and Simon in the backcourt last season. He can dial long-distance with the best of them—he drained 57.7 percent of his three-point attempts. Terry's again the first guard off the bench. Geary's departure and Olson's inexperience mean he'll log even more time at the point.

LOWDOWN

Raising Arizona

The young Wildcats are top-heavy with talent, but not even Olson knows how quickly he can harness it. The kids will stumble, especially during the grueling non-conference slate. But the Cats are much too talented and Olson much too good a coach for there to be major slippage.



If you give Dickerson a half step, he'll take the jam.

STARTING FIVE

DAVISON

Explosive leaper will remind Wildcat fans of former standouts Anthony Cook and Ray Ows.

DICKERSON

Spent August honing his skills in Japan as member of Pac-10 touring team.

BRAMLETT

Shot-blocker netted 51% from field as first big man off the bench last season.

SIMON

Lone returning starter, he's the main man with game on the line.

BIBBY

Like his dad, he's golden from downtown. But Pop was never this quick.

OFF THE BENCH

HARRIS (C)

He'll swat shots and bang inside, but don't expect much scoring.

EDGERSON (F)

Great in open floor and a hard-nosed inside player. Could be in starting lineup soon.

TERRY (G)

With Geary gone, he'll have to assume more of a leadership role in the backcourt.

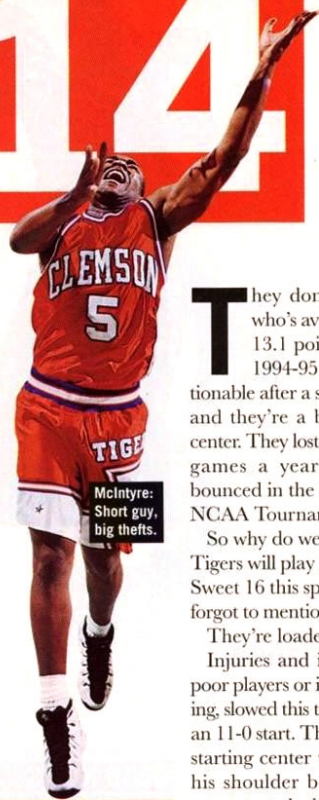
GOOD NEWS

- Since the 1986-87 season, Arizona is 48-0 against Oregon, Oregon State, and Washington State.
- Michael Dickerson and Miles Simon averaged 18.7 and 18.0 points, respectively, in the NCAAAs.
- Arizona has won at least 20 games for nine straight years.

BAD NEWS

- The departing seniors took 60% of the Wildcats' scoring.
- Simon's 65-foot buzzer-beater didn't win him an ESPY.
- Conference contenders UCLA and Stanford have tough, experienced inside players.

14 clem



McIntyre: Short guy, big thefts.

SCHEDULE

Clemson faces three teams ranked in the top 10 in its own conference, so Barnes will find out how good this team is long before March. To get the Tigers ready for tough ACC sledding ahead, Barnes scheduled them to play defending champion **Kentucky** on Nov. 15—on national TV in a packed RCA Dome against the coach he followed at Providence.

LAST SEASON

18-11

They don't have a player who's averaged more than 13.1 points a game, their 1994-95 MVP is still questionable after a severe knee injury, and they're a bit undersized at center. They lost 11 of their last 18 games a year ago and were bounced in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

So why do we say the Clemson Tigers will play their way into the Sweet 16 this spring? Because we forgot to mention one other thing.

They're loaded.

Injuries and inexperience, not poor players or inadequate coaching, slowed this team last year after an 11-0 start. The Tigers lost their starting center to a blood clot in his shoulder before the season even started, then saw a pair of knee injuries claim their starting backcourt by late January. That left second-year coach Rick Barnes no choice but to start the nation's youngest line-up—four freshmen and a sophomore.

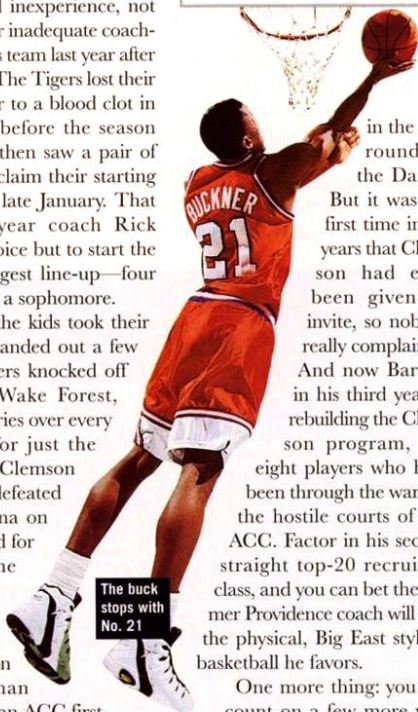
And while the kids took their lumps, they handed out a few too. The Tigers knocked off then-No. 6 Wake Forest, notched victories over every ACC team for just the fifth time in Clemson history, and defeated North Carolina on Tobacco Road for the first time since 1967. Five Tiger freshmen finished the season with more than 100 points—an ACC first.

Okay, so the kids lost to Georgia

KEY STAT

42.5

Rick Barnes brought the bruising Big East style of defense with him from Providence, and the Tigers have caught on. Opponents have learned they'll take a pounding when they go inside on Clemson, just one of the reason opponents shot a paltry 42.5 percent from the floor.



The buck stops with No. 21

in the first round of the Dance.

But it was the first time in six years that Clemson had even been given an invite, so nobody really complained. And now Barnes, in his third year of rebuilding the Clemson program, has eight players who have been through the wars on the hostile courts of the ACC. Factor in his second straight top-20 recruiting class, and you can bet the former Providence coach will play the physical, Big East style of basketball he favors.

One more thing: you can count on a few more wins this year too.

THE PLAYERS

Youth Is Served

Clemson was 11-0 when the team's leading scorer, junior guard Merl Code, was lost for the year with a torn ACL in his left knee. Into the breach stepped freshman Terrell McIntyre, 5'9" on his good days, and Clemson fans started seeing Muggsy Bogues in orange baggies. The ACC's shortest scholarship player led the team in assists and steals, made the all-ACC freshman team, and left everyone in this basketball-crazy corner of the world wondering why he'd been so lightly recruited.

Code's injury also meant that soph swingman Greg Buckner had to step up. But Buckner, a 6'4" defensive demon, was reluctant to take over the offense until Barnes sat him down for a quick review course in Go-to Guy 101. The result: Buckner averaged 20.7 points, shot 55 percent in the final six games, and called for the ball when the game was on the line. Exhibit A: a Buckner dunk with six-tenths of a second left to beat North Carolina in the ACC tournament.

No Tiger improved more from the beginning of the season to tournament time than soph Tony Christie, who gives the Tigers a slasher in the backcourt. The 6'6" Christie thinks dunk first—he had 15 last season—and needs to sharpen his outside game, but few doubt Clemson's top recruit of a year ago can do it.

Barnes' international contacts landed him Lithuanian Andrius Jurkunas, a 6'9" forward who plays

son

the finesse game as well as anyone. His love affair with the three-point stripe produced a team-high 51 treys, a Clemson freshman record. But someone will have to give Jurkunas directions to the post, and his defense is European-style all the way—either he gets the steal, the block (a team-high 34), or he gets smoked.

There's nothing soft about Clemson's center tandem of Tom Wideman and Harold Jamison. The 6'10" Wideman is a dean's list student off the court and a bruiser on: he started every game and averaged 5.2 boards in 23 minutes. Jamison, a 6'8" former defensive end, dropped 40 pounds to 238 and led the team with 5.9 boards a game. With 6'7", 250-pound soph Iker Iturbe, the starter two years ago, recovered from shoulder surgery, the Tigers can field a rugged, if small, frontline.

RECRUITING GRADE

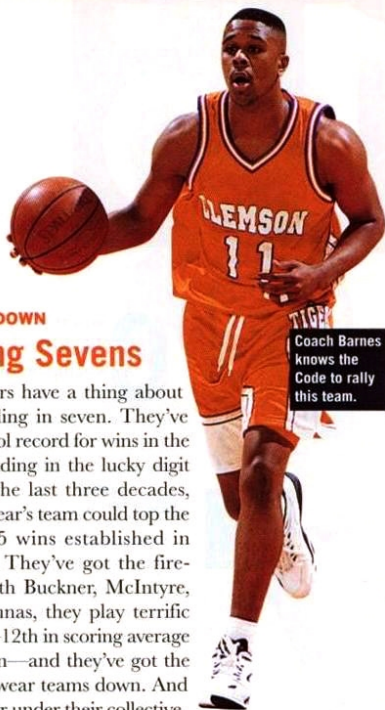
Rick Barnes hopes he won't need his freshmen as much as he did during the '95-96 campaign. But if he does, the talent's there. Barnes landed 6'6" **Vincent Whitt**, North Carolina player of the year, and 6'9" **Woni Mohamed**, a top-ranked center from the alma mater of Tigers Andrius Jurkunas and Tony Christie.

The bench is long on experience. Senior guard Bill Harder hurt his knee and lost five games, but still finished second in assists. Iturbe gets time at both forward slots, where he's more comfortable. If Code—Clemson's MVP two years ago—makes it back, Barnes will have to figure out how to give everyone minutes. After last season, that's one problem Barnes won't mind solving.

THE LOWDOWN

Rolling Sevens

The Tigers have a thing about years ending in seven. They've set a school record for wins in the season ending in the lucky digit each of the last three decades, and this year's team could top the record 25 wins established in 1986-87. They've got the firepower with Buckner, McIntyre, and Jurkunas, they play terrific defense—12th in scoring average last season—and they've got the depth to wear teams down. And with a year under their collective belt, the seven sophs who power this team are used to the pressure. Only a loaded ACC keeps Clemson from starting the season with a higher ranking, but that might not be the case by season's end. In case you hadn't noticed, that'll be in 1997.



Coach Barnes knows the Code to rally this team.

GOOD NEWS

- Seven freshmen combined for 647 rebounds, the most for a freshman class in ACC history.
- Tigers committed the third-fewest turnovers in ACC history.
- Rick Barnes now has a victory over Dean Smith, with whom he's had a running feud for two years.

BAD NEWS

- The Tigers shot a dismal 40% against ACC teams.
- Tom Wideman and Tony Christie shot a pitiful 56% from the line.
- Tigers are still unsure how Merl Code's knee will hold up after reconstructive surgery.

STARTING FIVE

BUCKNER

The 6'4" junior is both the go-to guy and the team's defensive stopper.

JURKUNAS

Loves the three and go-for-broke defense, but is still searching for an inside shot.

WIDEMAN

Think of a portable, scrappy redwood. His job is defense and rebounds.

CHRISTIE

Always looks for the dunk. Needs to stretch defenses more this season.

MCINTYRE

A fill-in last season, he'll be running the show this year.

OFF THE BENCH

CODE (G)

Clemson was 11-0 with him in the lineup. Unselfish, a good passer, and a smart shooter.

JAMISON (C)

The former Division I football prospect knows how to muscle his way to rebounds.

HARDER (G)

A solid, unspectacular guard who knows how to take care of the ball and run the offense.

15

iowa



Willoughby shares his coach's drive to win.

SCHEDULE

Even before Floyd, when Johnny Orr was packing them into Hilton Coliseum, the Cyclones played a Dolly Madison schedule. This year is no exception. Besides Marquette (home) and Iowa (away), the Cyclones play Alcorn State, Maryland-Eastern Shore, and Texas-Pan American and host two tournaments—with UTEP the toughest opponent—before the start of the Big 12 season.

LAST SEASON

24-9

Coming off the first Big Eight Tournament championship in school history and boasting one of the hottest coaches in basketball, the Cyclones are poised to make their first Sweet 16 appearance in more than a decade. Provided, of course, they remember to go to class.

Iowa State fans were summoned down from their summertime high when three of five returning starters were disciplined for blowing off classes, and a fourth, Kenny Pratt, was ruled academically ineligible for the fall. Dedric Willoughby, Kelvin Cato, and Shawn Bankhead were suspended by coach Tim Floyd for the season's first game for excessive cuts.

When they finally get it together, the Cyclones will be one of the most dangerous teams in college basketball. They have a heady point guard in Jacy Holloway, a crack marksman in Willoughby, a pair of baseline workhorses in Pratt and Bankhead, and a potential lottery pick in 6'11" manchild Cato.

A year ago, after losing three starters and being picked to finish last in the Big Eight, the Cyclones won nine of 14 league games, then upset Kansas in the conference tournament. Out in lonely Ames, this squad was easy to overlook. Not anymore. Floyd is on Chicago Bulls GM Jerry Krause's short list to replace Phil Jackson, and his collection of juco transfers and overlooked diamonds in the rough has gelled into a consensus top-20 team. They were able to sneak through last season, as overconfident opponents made crip-

KEY STAT

63.4

The Cyclones headed into last season having lost 95 percent of their scoring from the previous year, but they still managed to win a school-record 24 games. The solution was simple: don't let the other guys score. Iowa State held opponents to a Big Eight-low 63.4 points per game.

pling mistakes. This year, they won't be sneaking up on anyone—but with this much talent, they won't have to.

THE PLAYERS

Now, Cato

Floor boss Holloway is one of the most underrated and effective point guards in the country. In three seasons, he has the best assist to turnover ratio in school history (2.96 to 1). When he takes the shot himself, though, it's a different story. At Floyd's urging, Holloway more than doubled his field goal attempts last year, but netted only 34 percent, a career low.

Most of the shooting duties belong to Willoughby, a 6'3" senior transfer who followed Floyd from New Orleans. He led the team with 20.5 points per game and topped the

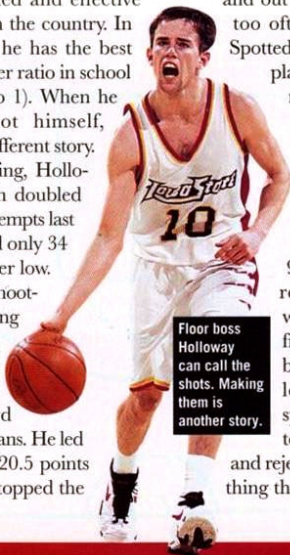
Big Eight with 88 threes. He'll take the big shot against anyone, anytime, and he's durable, averaging 39 minutes in conference games.

Two of the most overlooked players in the conference last year were Pratt and Bankhead, book-end juco forwards who specialized in blue-collar work and didn't take many coffee breaks. Pratt started 27 games, averaging 15.3 points and 6.5 rebounds. He was a terror under the basket, posting up and boxing out. If he can't get his grades up, the Cyclones will be just another March wind.

Bankhead, a 6'6" senior, is the Cyclones' defensive stopper; one of his masterpieces last season was holding Oklahoma's Ryan Minor to a season-low 16 points.

Cato is the package ISU fans can't wait to unwrap. The 6'11", 245-pound center didn't play in high school because he moved in and out of school districts too often to be eligible.

Spotted by recruiters while playing AAU ball, he made his Cyclone debut on Dec. 16 with an 18-rebound performance against Wyoming and went on to average 9.6 points and 7.7 rebounds in what was his de facto freshman year. His best assets are his long arms, quick springs, and ability to stand in the paint and reject just about everything that moves.



Floor boss Holloway can call the shots. Making them is another story.

state

The biggest problem last season was a lack of depth, with three starters playing more than 30 minutes per game. Seven-footer Tyler Peterson's minutes virtually disappeared when Cato arrived, and when he did play, the Ames native did little more than take up space. That's more than 6'11", 210-pound New Zealand beanpole Tony Rampton could manage. Only 6'6" wing forward Klay Edwards, who logged nearly 20 minutes per game and shot 58 percent from the floor, made a significant contribution off the bench.

This year, Floyd thinks he's filled the bench gap with two of the nation's top recruits: All-American point guard Deandre Harris and 6'6" forward Brad Johnson, who led his Indian Hills CC team to a 66-7 record over two years, including last season's No. 1 JC ranking. Plus there's Stevie Johnson, a 6'5"

RECRUITING GRADE

Despite the veteran squad, Floyd managed to lure talent to fill last year's holes. Juco transfer **Deandre Harris** provides needed minutes and potential scoring punch at point guard, while **Brad Johnson** thinks every rebound has his name on it. The biggest catch is 6'5", 220-pound freshman **Stevie Johnson**. He runs a 4.3 40 and has a 38-inch vertical leap.

freshman leaper who was the second-leading scorer in Mississippi high school history.

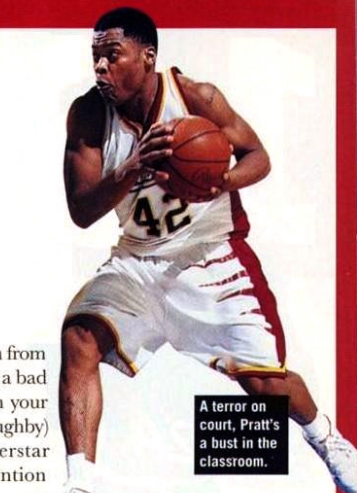
LOWDOWN

By the Book

The 'Clones have tremendous chemistry and a desire to lock in on everything Floyd says—not surprising, considering he's res-

cued many of them from hoops oblivion. It's a bad sign, though, when your team leader (Willoughby) and budding superstar (Cato), not to mention two other seniors (Bankhead and Pratt) can't get out of the off-season without academic suspensions. But at least Floyd, a master motivator and top bench coach, put his foot down and let them know he won't tolerate it. If the Cyclones come close to being as disciplined in class as they are on the court, they'll be terrific.

The improved bench gives the starters a break, which should keep them primed for the big March push. If they're healthy, and eligible, and Cato grows into the lottery-pick force everyone expects, the Cyclones could spin their way to the Final Four.



A terror on court, Pratt's a bust in the classroom.

GOOD NEWS

- Hilton Coliseum's a nice place to live, but you wouldn't want to visit: from 1991 to '95, ISU averaged nearly 15 more points at home than on the road.
- **Tim Floyd** was named Big Eight Coach of the Year and was runner-up for the national honor.
- **Dedric Willoughby** was All-Big Eight and Big Eight Newcomer of the Year.

BAD NEWS

- Last year, Iowa State's success was surprising. This year, it's expected.
- There's no proven scorer coming off the bench.
- The Cyclones finished last in the conference in rebounding margin (minus 6.1 per game) and did nothing to improve it.

STARTING FIVE

BANKHEAD

Sets tone for one of the toughest, in-your-face, man-to-man defenses around.

PRATT

Small (6'4", 215) for power forward, but can score, rebound, block shots—and win.

CATO

Set a Cyclone record with 71 blocks last year. If Floyd can push his buttons, could emerge as a monster.

WILLOUGHBY

Has guts, good aim, and grit. Wanted to practice the day after the season ended last year.

HOLLOWAY

Sure-handed point guard who's de facto coach on floor. Played full 40 minutes nine times.

OFF THE BENCH

S. JOHNSON (F)

Talent alone will earn him minutes. Could start early in place of Pratt.

EDWARDS (F)

Sophomore is Cyclones' super sub. Can play any position up front.

HARRIS (G)

Juco All-American will spell—and maybe out-score—Holloway at point.

16 massac



Travisio is a real operator from long distance.

SCHEDULE

In a word, bruising. Especially early: UMass opens in the Maui Classic against a field that includes Kansas, Virginia, Cal, Iowa, and South Carolina. Then Georgetown on the opening night of the Great Eight Tournament in Chicago (winner gets either Cincinnati or Kansas). Fresno State at home. Wake Forest and North Carolina on the road. Plus the long-awaited "U-Game" with UConn in Hartford. All this before the A-10 schedule.

Too bad that the Marcus Camby/John Calipari era at Massachusetts will be remembered mostly for the way it ended. Camby's revelation last June that he and some friends had accepted gifts from a sports agent during the Minutemen's 35-2 Final Four season sent fans into shock. When Calipari accepted the New Jersey Nets' coaching job shortly thereafter, abandoning his team when it needed him most, it provided an ugly ending to a beautiful year.

Calipari's successor, former UMass assistant James "Bruiser" Flint, may benefit from last spring's crash and burn. Since the mood in Amherst in the wake of the Camby/Calipari unpleasantness went straight from funeral to surly, the 31-year-old Flint, the second-youngest coach in Division I, won't have to contend with the giant shadow cast by the school's dream season.

As for that giant shadow, Flint helped put it there. In seven years as a UMass assistant, he recruited the majority of the Minutemen who made the trip to the Meadowlands.

Flint, who would have been snatched up for another head coaching job had this one not opened up, may not have inherited a Final Four contender, but he takes over a solid program. Massachusetts has won 183 games the last seven seasons—only Arkansas, Kansas, Kentucky, and North Carolina have won more.

KEY STAT

15

That's the Minutemen's current winning streak in the UMass Invitational, aka the Atlantic 10 Tournament. UMass has not lost a conference tournament game since an 84-83 OT defeat to George Washington in the quarterfinals of the 1991 tourney.

He's also inherited a killer schedule. Among the heavyweights: Wake Forest, Georgetown, North Carolina, Connecticut, and maybe a tournament matchup with Kansas.

It won't be easy. But if the Bruiser keeps the program on a steady course—20 wins without scandal would please the UMass faithful—he'll be given the benefit of every doubt.

THE PLAYERS

Reload

Replacing Camby is the big job, of course, but Flint also has to fill the jobs left vacant by starting forwards Donta Bright and Dana Dingle. That's 45 points and 20 rebounds per game, as well as a ton of experience missing

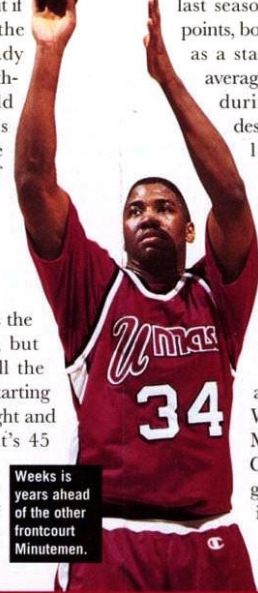
from the UMass frontline.

Camby's heir apparent is sophomore center Lari Ketner, who sat out last season as a Prop 48 recruit. Ketner made the grade in the classroom with room to spare, landing on the athletic director's honor roll with a 3.0 GPA. Now he has to make his mark as Camby's replacement. At 6'10" and 270 pounds, Ketner's big enough to fill the hole in the middle. It's the size of his talent that's in question.

Junior Inus Norville filled in capably during Camby's three-game absence last year. The 6'8" forward's athleticism is scary, but he'll have to be more of a factor in the Minuteman attack.

Senior Tyrone Weeks, a 6'7" power forward who was one of the country's top sixth men last season, now delivers points, boards, and muscle as a starter. Weeks has averaged 5.0 rebounds during his career despite logging just 16 minutes per game. He'll be joined up front by freshman Ajmal Basit, a 6'9" banger who'll see time at both forward and center.

A trio of heralded freshmen—Winston Smith, Mike Babul, and Chris Kirkland—gives UMass flexibility at small forward and big



Weeks is years ahead of the other frontcourt Minutemen.



husetts

guard. When the season opens, one of the rookies, most likely the 6'6" Babul, will get the nod at the three spot.

Luckily for Flint, Calipari left him the best backcourt in two countries. The Minutemen will go as far as Edgar Padilla and Carmelo Travieso can take them. Padilla and Travieso, members of the 1996 Puerto Rican Olympic team, are tough, experienced, 6'2" guards who think like a pair of coaches on the floor.

The sweet-shooting Travieso averaged 12.6 points per game and set an Atlantic 10 single-season record for three pointers with 104. Padilla, the school's all-time steals leader, had 19 steals in the NCAA Tournament, the second-highest total ever.

Both can pass, shoot, steal, play tough defense, and take care of the ball. And they're durable:

RECRUITING GRADE

One of the top 10 classes in the nation. **Ajmal Basit** led Jersey City (N.J.) St. Anthony's to the mythical national high school title. He and **Winston Smith** were mates on the New Jersey team that finished sixth in the Boston Shootout last June. Forward **Mike Babul** and guard **Monty Mack** led Boston to the Shootout title. Mack, the tournament MVP, will sit out the year for academic reasons.

each averaged 36 minutes a game. Padilla logged a school-record 1,351 minutes last season, while Travieso had 1,325, second on the all-time list.

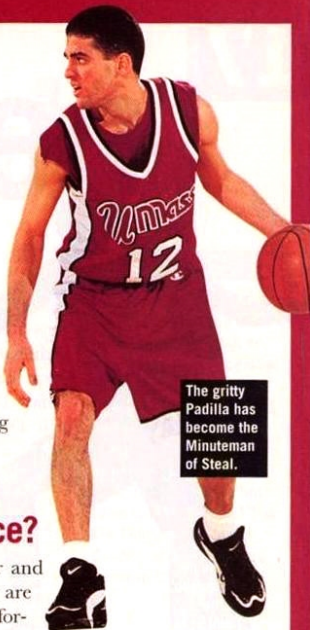
Sophomore Charlton Clarke, comfortable at both shooting guard and the point, takes the pressure off Padilla and Travieso. The 6'3" Clarke sparkled during

a two-week tour of Italy with Team America, averaging 22 points per game and earning MVP honors.

LOWDOWN

Shall We Dance?

The Player of the Year and the Coach of the Year are gone. So are the starting forwards. Okay, that means UMass won't go 35-2 this season. But Travieso and Padilla provide leadership in the backcourt and Flint will be a stabilizing influence on the bench. If the frontline replacements step up and the freshmen contribute, the Minutemen will again win the Atlantic 10 regular-season and tournament titles. That means they'll be playing in March. Just not as long as last year.



The gritty Padilla has become the Minuteman of Steal.

GOOD NEWS

- UMass has won five straight Atlantic 10 titles outright.
- Under **James Flint**, the Minutemen don't have to learn a new system.
- UMass is 39-2 in the three-year-old Mullins Center.

BAD NEWS

- There is no proven scorer at small forward.
- The early nonconference schedule could break the team's confidence.
- **Ajmal Basit** might still be stewing over **John Calipari's** defection to the pros.

STARTING FIVE

BABUL

Anymore at home like him? Well, not at home; his twin Jon plays for Georgia Tech.

WEEKS

Built like a defensive lineman, he blows the opposition off the ball, er, boards.

KETNER

Doesn't have to be Camby, just play solid defense, rebound, and score a little down low.

TRAVIESO

Deadly from downtown (40.3%) and a tenacious perimeter defender.

PADILLA

He'll leave UMass as school's all-time leader in steals and assists.

OFF THE BENCH

BASIT (F/C)

A ferocious rebounder who'll see time at both power forward and center.

NORVILLE (F/C)

A versatile athletic talent who could end up as a starter at small forward.

CLARKE (G)

Versatile enough to spell Travieso and Padilla in the backcourt.

new mexico



Shields needs no protection in the paint.

SCHEDULE

New Mexico faces four pre-holiday tussles: **Arizona** (in the Pit) and **Texas Tech** (in Lubbock), plus the annual home-and-home bloodletting with in-state rival **New Mexico State**. The good news is that the Fresno State Bulldogs aren't scheduled. The bad news is that the Lobos may face them in Las Vegas, the site for the WAC's conference tourney and Bulldog coach Jerry Tarkanian's old home turf.

LAST SEASON

28-5

Fans in New Mexico don't get it. They keep complaining that the Lobos need to get to the next level. Well, guess what? They're there.

Dave Bliss has taken the Lobos to four NCAA Tournaments in the past six years. Context? Before he arrived, the school had gone three times in 85 years. Now they've actually won a game, beating Kansas State in round one to snap a 22-year NCAA drought.

Okay, so they lost to Georgetown in the second round—they got a taste of the good life. This year they want more.

And they could get it, because the Lobos have the most talented threesome in the WAC and one of the best in the West. No spot player in the WAC is as immovable and as deft a finisher as 6'9" sophomore Kenny Thomas. No shooting guard can levitate and extend his jumper the way senior guard Charles Smith can. And good luck trying to find a third option as versatile and prolific as 6'8" junior Clayton Shields.

This team is too experienced, too smooth, not to duplicate last year's success. And this time, they just might satisfy their fans and step up to that proverbial next level.

THE PLAYERS

Thinking Big

After the massive Hoyas hammered the Lobos on the glass last March, Bliss put his players on an extended weight program. The mission: get bigger and stronger.

For Thomas, it was simply the latter: A devastating inside player à la the young Karl Malone, Thomas is already plenty big. At last summer's U.S. Select team trials in Colorado Springs, he showed up at a jiggly 280, played more like Bob's Big Boy than the Mailman, and got cut.

Despite the weight problem and his propensity for foul trouble—a

RECRUITING GRADE

No blue-chippers here. A 6'11" Oklahoma State transfer who spent two years behind Bryant Reeves, **Ben Baum** can spread a defense from the perimeter. **G. Lamont Long**, an explosive scorer, will be groomed to replace **Smith**. **Damion Jenkins** continues the tradition of hometown point guards. **Gibson's** heir apparent, he'll redshirt this season.

school-record 118 personals—Thomas was one of the nation's most productive freshmen last year. He and North Carolina's Antawn Jamison were the only two first-year men to average 14 points and seven rebounds and shoot better than 55 percent from the field.

Thomas is now a slim (for him) 260, which should make his already wicked low-post game even tougher. But should he hack his way to the bench, 7'1" junior Daniel Santiago must pick up the slack. The Lobos need Santiago, who played last summer for Puerto Rico's Olympic and Junior National teams, to flex the same muscle he showed against the United States in the World Under-22 competition in Caguas, where he dropped a 20-point, 11-rebound dime on Tim Duncan.

Shields (14.5 points, 6.5 rebounds per game) happily moved

from power forward to small forward when Thomas signed. He can drive and post up, and he's deadly from downtown (40.9 percent). At power forward, 6'7" senior Greg Schornstein (7.6 ppg, 3.8 rpg) is gritty enough to scrounge for loose balls and eagle-eyed enough to hit the three.

Powering the backcourt offense is Smith, nicknamed Spider because of an 83-inch wingspan that makes him a pesky defender. But it's his shooting that makes him a WAC player of the year candidate. The Lobos' top scorer (19.5) in '95-96, he should supplant Luc Longley as the school's career scoring leader this year.

Point guard David Gibson, the consummate unselfish player, had a 2 to 1 assist to turnover ratio last year; and he and Smith work the drive-and-kick to perfection. But Gibson must improve his abysmal perimeter game (13.8 percent from three-point range) to keep other teams from smothering Smith.

Off the bench, Ben Baum, a 6'11" transfer from Oklahoma State, provides some high-post 15-foot relief. Royce Olney, a hotshot who can play either guard spot, hit 43.7 percent of his treys.

LOWDOWN

Next Step

Led by the terrific threesome of Thomas, Shields, and Smith, Los Lobos are co-favorites (with Utah) to win the Mountain Division of the WAC, and a threat to win their second straight conference tournament title. They're a lock for a return visit to the NAAs. But to make it past the second round and into the Sweet 16, super soph Thomas needs front-court help.

fresno state

Can the old guy with the towel still make it happen on the bench? Signs point to yes.

Within one year of being hired, Jerry Tarkanian, 66, the winningest coach by percentage in college hoops history, has assembled his usual cast of troubled and talented athletes. They'll challenge for a top-20 spot all season, and come next year, maybe even a Final Four berth.

Last season—winning 22 games, beating the top-10 Utah Utes twice, and advancing into the third round of the NIT—was one of Tark's best court-side coaching jobs ever, especially considering Fresno's sorry state of affairs as much as a month into the season. In one year, Tarkanian has turned an irrelevant college basketball backwater into a burgeoning national power.

Tarkanian has players and a program on the rise, and history tells us that only he can beat himself under those circumstances.

THE PLAYERS

Mad Skills

The Bulldogs are deep, athletic, and capable of running and pressing hard for 40 minutes—exactly what Tarkanian loves to do.

It all starts with his guards, the threesome of Dominick Young, Kendrick Brooks, and Chris Herren. Young was one of the nation's top clutch players a year ago, burying six game-winning shots for the Dawgs. As a duo, he and Brooks combined to lead the nation in three-pointers, pumping in 216 from beyond the arc. The 5'10" point guard also comes up big at the other end, leading the WAC in steals for two straight seasons.

RECRUITING GRADE

Nobody in the nation is procuring talent as fast as Tarkanian. Sitting out this year are former Pac-10 Freshman of the Year **Tremaine Fowlkes** (California) and center **Avondre Jones** (USC). Figure Tark's rep to lure more refugees like **Chris Herren** and juco standouts like **Daymond Forney** Fresno's way.

At 6'5", Brooks is the perfect package: a shooting guard with size and a sweet outside touch. A first team All-WAC selection last year, he lit up the juco ranks for two years before bringing his 20 points a game to Fresno.

Herren, a sophomore transfer from Boston College, could be the best of the three. Tark thinks the 6'3" two guard might even be the best backcourt player he's ever coached, better than Reggie Theus, better than Greg Anthony. And this is a guy who, because of transfer rules and injury, hasn't even played in two years. Herren will be on the floor from start to finish, cutting into Brooks' minutes and Young's stats. Tark fully expects some bruised egos, but the competition should keep the Fresno State backcourt the best in the WAC.

Two first-year players—Prop 48 Terrance Roberson, a top-25 high school player, and 6'8" Daymond Forney, a juco All-Tournament selection two years ago—are prospects the moment they step onto the court. The downside? Neither has played in a year. Plus, Roberson has some attitude and needs a push. Tark hopes it comes from nomadic sub Danyell Macklin, a 6'7" swingman who's had stopovers at Western Kentucky

and Sullivan. Coming off the bench with Macklin is Darnell McCulloch, one of the conference's best sixth men a season ago.

The weak link could be at center. Rahsaan Smith, a 6'10" shot-blocker and rebounder, starts, but he and backup Khary Stanley have a bad habit of phoning it in. If 6'10" sophomore Gerrit Denge, a German national who pumped iron over the summer, adds mental toughness to his bulked up Teutonic frame, he will provide needed help on the boards.

With two NBA-caliber scorers down low, Fresno will try to work the ball inside instead of relying on Young and Brooks. How the frontcourt responds will determine the difference between a Sweet 16 run and a second-round bowout.

LOWDOWN

Bullish Futures

The Bulldogs have as much talent as anyone in the West. On that basis alone, they should win the WAC. But this assemblage of ability guarantees nothing. Macklin and Forney, for instance, need to get a little matter of a summer-time altercation off the police blotter. There's also a question of chemistry. Herren has not played for two years, Roberson and Forney were red-shirts a year ago, and Macklin spent the year upping his grades. Even so, give Tark the benefit of the doubt and pencil in Fresno State for a Tournament slot, even a run to the Sweet 16. But with more talent eligible next season, this year may just be a prelude to something bigger and better.

SCHEDULE

In the WAC's ridiculous new alignment, the Bulldogs don't play Utah or New Mexico. If December doesn't waste them (UMass, Texas, LSU, and Texas Tech) the Dawgs should roll through the weak WAC Pacific Division. The one game not to miss comes Feb. 17 at the Thomas and Mack Center, when Tark goes home to UNLV.

LAST SEASON

22-11

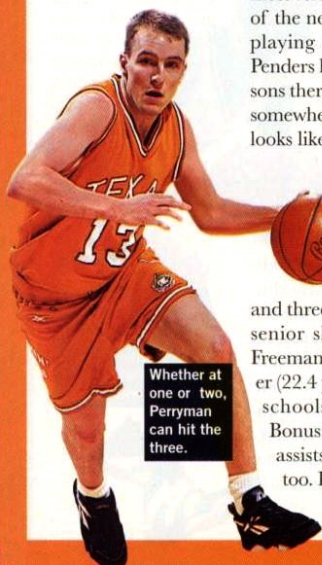


The smooth running Brooks has the Shark babbling with praise.

texas

SCHEDULE

The Longhorns have the toughest overall schedule of Penders' tenure, which figures because their new conference is the Big 12. But UT also has home nonconference games against Rhode Island, Louisville, and Fresno State, all toughies. On the road, Texas faces Utah, Arizona, Providence, Florida, and Oregon State. By the time UT starts conference play, Penders will know what kind of stuff his team is made of.



Whether at one or two, Perryman can hit the three.

Tom Penders' hopes for a breakout season literally revolve around the center of his lineup. For the Longhorns to advance past the NCAA Tournament's second round for the first time since 1990, they'll need inspired play from 6'9" senior center Dennis Jordan, who reported last fall at 310 pounds—not exactly the run-the-floor player so crucial to the Texas scheme.

Since then, Jordan's trimmed 40 pounds from his frame. But is he ready for prime time, and to replace the former mainstay in the middle, Sonny Alvarado? Jordan did play some of his best basketball down the stretch last season. And, during the Longhorns' summer Australian tour, he showed the proper "tude for the position by getting the word "Thug" tattooed on his arm.

Jordan's improvement is no guarantee of a Sweet 16 spot for the Longhorns. This may be Penders' best defensive squad and his most versatile—but, as a member of the new Big 12, Texas will be playing the toughest schedule Penders has faced in his nine seasons there. But you've got to start somewhere—and lean and mean looks like as good a place as any.

THE PLAYERS

Versatility

Texas returns 10 of its top 12 players and three starters, including 6'6" senior shooting guard Reggie Freeman, the top returning scorer (22.4 points per game) among schools in the conference.

Bonus: he's a good passer (3.9 assists) and rebounder (6.7), too. Last season, Freeman led

Texas in scoring in 24 of 31 games, in assists 21 times, and in rebounding eight times.

Sophomores Kris Clack (6'5") and DeJuan Vazquez (6'4") have the ability to play three positions: point guard, shooting guard, and small forward. Clack, who averaged 12.1 points and 8.4 boards as a starter, led the team with 24 blocked shots and often was asked to guard larger players.

If Penders decides to move Vazquez to small forward, point guard is up for grabs. The candidates would be 6'2" junior Brandy Perryman, who shared the duties

RECRUITING GRADE

Solid, not sensational. Gabe Muoneke is expected to step right in at power forward, where Texas is thin and needs immediate rebounding help. Guard Anthony Goode has jets and may figure into the point guard rotation, especially if he can hit the jumper. Juco transfer Ira Clark, a 6'8" forward, was impressive in early-season workouts; he's expected to back up Jordan at center.

there last year with Vazquez, 5'10" sophomore Titus Warmlesley, and 6'1" freshman Anthony Goode.

The emergence of Warmlesley and Goode at point not only would ease the moving of Vazquez, but also would allow Penders to use Perryman as a three-point threat. Running the team seemed to wear out Perryman at times last season, especially in January, when he went through an 0-for-21 three-point slump. In the last 12 games, he bounced back to make 44.6 percent of his treys.

Warmlesley needs to get his

game under control if he wants the job. He had eight more turnovers than assists last season and shot only 26.6 percent.

Freshman Gabe Muoneke, a 6'7" forward, is considered a probable starter at power forward. Raw as he is, he was one of the most dominant high school seniors in the Houston area last season, shooting 67 percent. In one game as a junior, he had 29 rebounds.

The solid bench is studded with players who've had experience as starters. Carlton Dixon, a 6'5" junior, and 6'10" senior Sheldon Quarles know the system and have shown they can perform under pressure. And Texas needs bodies for its pressing full-court defense and its midcourt and half-court trapping schemes.

LOWDOWN

Needs to Bulk Up

Texas attacks so relentlessly, the team seems all offense, but, in fact, the offense feeds off the many opportunities created by a pressing defense. Over the last three years, UT has forced opponents into an average of 22.3 turnovers a game. Last season, they had a 6.6 advantage in turnovers per game, second only to national champion Kentucky's 6.8. But the offense needs to take better advantage of the opportunities: Texas shot only 41.3 percent overall and 31.8 percent from three-point range.

Texas should be the best team in the Big 12's South Division, though the frontline is probably too thin and inconsistent to make the Final Four. But a trip to the Sweet 16, and possibly the Elite Eight, is not out of the question.

stanford



No more standing on the fringe of the Pac-10 elite like the kid who never gets picked for a playground game. No more slipping into the NCAA Tournament with an invitation that looks like it might have been forged. Stanford has waited a long, long time, but this year the Cardinal becomes a bona fide Pac-10 title contender.

Contend? Hey, we say Stanford wins its first conference championship since 1963. What's more, we say the Cardinal hangs around the Top 25 all year. And come March, we say they'll make a big splash. In each of the past two seasons, Stanford made it into the second round of the NCAA Tournament, losing to UMass both times. This year, they'll hang around a bit longer.

Everything emanates from senior point guard Brevin Knight. That's great, because he starts the season as college basketball's best—and that may not change even after Jacque Vaughn returns from injury. Nobody in the conference controls a game more deftly than Knight on the court and coach Mike Montgomery on the sideline. In Montgomery's 10 seasons, Stanford has reached the postseason eight times. Pre-Montgomery, the Cardinal hadn't made a tournament since 1942. Knight and Montgomery were the reason the college kids almost beat the Dream Team this summer in an exhibition game.

The Pac-10? A light scrimmage.

THE PLAYERS

Knight Moves

Everybody knows Knight's story by now, right? Ball-boy for the Seton Hall Pirates, unrecruited

RECRUITING GRADE

Nothing special about this group of freshmen and transfers. Shooting guard **David Mosely** was *USA Today* player of the year in New Mexico, and there's some hope **Mark Madsen** can be a mature player after his two-year Mormon mission. Stanford's counting on new recruiter **Trent Johnson**, from Rice, to fill some holes with a big-time class for '97-98. They'll need it: Knight will be gone after this season.

by them, gets a scholarship to go west, proves everybody wrong. (Think *Rudy* in short pants.) He can score, pass, and move down the court like a waterbug on a pond. Last season, he ranked sixth in the nation with 7.3 assists per game and added a team-leading 15.5 points. Plus, he's fully wired to his coach's bright mind.

Knight can't do it alone, of course, and with the loss of talented shooting guard Dion Cross, a lot of pressure shifts to sophomore Kris Weems, who logged minor minutes behind Cross last season and has never started a game. But he does know a thing or two about pressure: last year, Weems hit two late three-pointers to beat UCLA. Sophomore Arthur Lee serves as a more than ample backup at both guard spots.

Stanford's counting heavily on 7'1", 245-pound center Tim Young, a redshirt sophomore out most of last season with a back injury. He gives the Cardinal a fierce paint presence, a deft scoring touch, and a voracious board game. He and Knight form one of the best one-two punches in the nation.

But every silver lining has a cloud, even in sunny Palo Alto.

Inexperience and injury at the forward spots could be Stanford's Achilles' heel. No returning forward averaged even five points a game last year. Mark Seaton moves to power forward after backing up Young last season. His 60.5 percent shooting from the floor is misleading—he didn't shoot much—and his 3.2 rebounds don't recommend him as a board sweeper. Small forward Rich Jackson was voted most inspirational player by his teammates for toughing it out through painful knee surgery in February, not for his 2.1 points per game. South Carolina transfer Pete Van Elswyk, Mark Madsen (back from a Mormon missionary posting), and Pete Sauer (one of Stanford's top recruits a year ago) provide untested depth at forward.



Knight is true royalty at the point.

SCHEDULE

Outside of the Great Alaska Shootout, where the Cardinal could meet defending NCAA champion **Kentucky** and runner-up **Syracuse**, this is hardly an impressive nonconference schedule. But keep your eyes on a homecoming game for Knight against **Seton Hall** in East Rutherford, N.J. Otherwise, a neutral-court game with **Manhattan** and games with **Navy** and **San Diego** aren't exactly the best prep for March.

LOWDOWN

Flying High

One thing that's been a Cardinal hallmark—especially a year ago—is team chemistry. Montgomery gets his players to buy into his system, then execute it, with egos kept in check. That shouldn't change.

Never before has Stanford entered a season off consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances or with the "Hey, we can do it" attitude that comes from sweeping the vaunted Arizona Wildcats. This Stanford squad abounds in speed and athleticism. But they desperately need Young's back to stay strong. Without him, they come up short in scoring punch and interior defense. With him, they're golden. The elusive Sweet 16 is within sight.

LAST SEASON

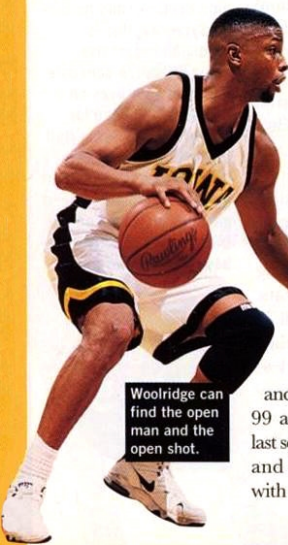
20-9

SCHEDULE

The Hawkeyes might enjoy the beach at the Maui Invitational, but bullies such as **Kansas**, opening opponent **Cal-Berkeley**, and **UMass** will be kicking sand in their faces on the court. On the other hand, **Western Illinois**, **Drake**, **Grambling**, **Northern Iowa**, and **Cal-Northridge** are cream puffs. **Iowa State** and **Missouri** visit for quality December games.

LAST SEASON

23-9



Woolridge can find the open man and the open shot.

'm back." If you think Chicago was happy when Michael Jordan said those two little words, you should have been in Iowa City last summer when Jess Settles repeated them.

The 6'7", 220-pound forward put his name into the NBA draft pool, but withdrew it two days before picks were made. An Iowa fan fave, his decision elated just about everyone. That included NBA scouting director Marty Blake, for whom the issue was whether Settles had developed the requisite skills of a top choice.

Settles hadn't, but the honorable mention All-American is ready to lead the Hawkeyes in their quest for the Big Ten title. Michigan is still the preseason favorite, but Settles' decision makes the competition more interesting. Coach Tom Davis may be hard-pressed to field a competitive team against strong opponents in the early going, but he should have the Hawkeyes together for the conference stretch run. And next June, Settles will be ready to move on up.

THE PLAYERS

Dynamic Duo

The Hawkeyes have an inside-outside combination as good as any in the Big Ten with Settles and point guard Andre Woolridge. Both were first-team All-Big Ten picks.

Settles intimidates and never backs down. On top of 99 assists and 40 three-pointers last season, he averaged 15.1 points and 7.5 rebounds, and peaked with 21 points and 15 rebounds

against George Washington in the NCAA Tournament. With Iowa thin at guard, look for him to play some on the perimeter.

Woolridge set an Iowa single-season record with 193 assists last year and led the conference in dishes with a 6.0 average. But the senior, who played his first season at Nebraska before transferring, can also score. He averaged 13.1

RECRUITING GRADE

Tom Davis didn't grab any national names, but then, he seldom does. The guards he signed—**Ryan Luehrsmann** and **Jeff Walker**—could be best served by redshirting. But the Hawkeyes' guard shortage is so severe that Walker will start and Luehrsmann, a former Iowa ballboy from nearby Cedar Rapids, will back up Woolridge.

points and had season highs of 28 against Penn State and Michigan—two of the better teams in the conference. Woolridge can also hit the trey and should become more of a factor behind the line with Chris Kingsbury gone.

Settles and Woolridge must assume bigger offensive roles this season. The Hawkeyes have lost much of the balanced attack that led the Big Ten in scoring. Four of the team's top six players—Russ Millard, Kenyon Murray, Kingsbury, and Mon'ter Glasper—are gone.

The loss of Millard, who was picked 39th by Phoenix in the NBA draft, will hit especially hard. He was Iowa's second-leading scorer (13.7) and rebounder (7.0), and led the team in field goal, free-throw, and three-point percentages. Murray holds the Iowa record for career steals and

Kingsbury is the most prolific three-point shooter in Hawkeye history. It's no wonder Davis is concerned about ball-handling and outside shooting.

How far the Hawkeyes go depends on several young or virtually untested players. Highly touted center Guy Rucker (6'9", 235 pounds) will prove pivotal in the pivot. A redshirt freshman, he averaged 22 points, 16 rebounds, and 7 blocked shots as a high school senior. Jeff Walker, a 6'4" freshman who averaged 22 points last year in high school, starts at shooting guard by default.

Junior forward Ryan Bowen (5.5 points, 4.5 rebounds) missed the final five games last season after breaking his left hand. He's Iowa's best bet to inject some of the frontcourt grit Millard supplied. Bowen is an excellent athlete and outstanding defensive player who started 27 games in the past two seasons. Forward J.R. Koch, who played in every game as a freshman, could contend for a starting job.

LOWDOWN

Tough Row to Hoe

Davis is the winningest coach in Iowa history (207-109), but his 11th season could prove his most daunting, particularly if Settles or Woolridge is injured. Whether Iowa can compete in the frontcourt without sufficient bulk is a crucial question. Last season, Iowa was the hands-down favorite to win the Big Ten title, but finished a disappointing fourth, going 23-9 overall and 11-7 in the conference. But playing in a down conference with enough easy marks should again garner the Hawkeyes an NCAA bid.

connecticut

22

Can a college basketball team lose Ray Allen, Travis Knight, and Doron Sheffer—all NBA draft selections—and still return as a bona fide contender?

Before you answer that question, consider the magic spell coach Jim Calhoun has cast on UConn the last few seasons—175-53 in the 1990s. He's managed to transform a given-up-for-dead operation into a robust, self-regenerating program, one capable of suffering big losses without dropping all the way back down to the bottom of the ladder.

So, even with a roster that includes six newcomers and only two players with more than a year of experience at the school, the Huskies are still plenty dangerous.

That's because two of the returnees are strictly top-drawer. Ricky Moore (nearly 20 minutes a game last season) and Rashamel Jones (14-plus), who got to mature in limited but important time off the bench as freshmen, now take their shot at becoming one of the premier backcourts in the country.

They're surrounded by a fresh infusion of talent ready and able to build on the Allen-Knight-Sheffer legacy.

Reports of the Huskies' demise after the loss of last year's big three were premature: UConn basketball is alive and well.

THE PLAYERS

Pressure Point

At the point, Moore is a selfless penetrator with terrific speed and a devastating first step. Though relatively inexperienced, he's surprisingly savvy—witness his instinct for making the right floor choices (99 assists vs. only 49

RECRUITING GRADE

The late addition of Kevin Freeman from Paterson Catholic (N.J.), gives Jim Calhoun a small forward who could start. G Richard Hamilton of Coatesville, Pa., who made both McDonald's and Magic Johnson's all-star games, had his talents obscured because he played in the same area as Kobe Bryant.

turnovers last year). He's also tuned in to the other half of the point guard's game: stopping the opposing floor general in his tracks.

At shooting guard, Jones is solid. He has an NBA physique that didn't always fit his game last season—he played a little soft, particularly in Big East games, which can sometimes resemble an organized street fight.

Overall, though, Jones showed a nice touch to go with an explosive move to the hoop. An ankle injury slowed the swingman's progress, but he's fully recovered. Defensively, the 6'5" Jones shows promise of becoming a hard customer—and should deliver on it as he becomes more familiar with the UConn scheme.

The lone returning starter, 6'8", 240-pound senior Kirk King, becomes the new go-to guy up front. King, who never averaged more than four points per game prior to last year, got his offensive game together in a big way last season, hitting a stunning 22 shots in a row at one point. He would have led the league in field goal percentage had he not fallen slightly short of the required number of attempts. His scoring average—9.9 per game—was just a taste of what's to come. So were his 6.3 boards an outing.

Other returnees who'll make a contribution include guards Dion Carson and Kyle Chapman and 6'7" forward Ruslan Inyatkin. Carson, a backup last season, should see more time now. Chapman, a senior, joined the team as a walk-on last season. Inyatkin shows promise as a rebounder and scorer.

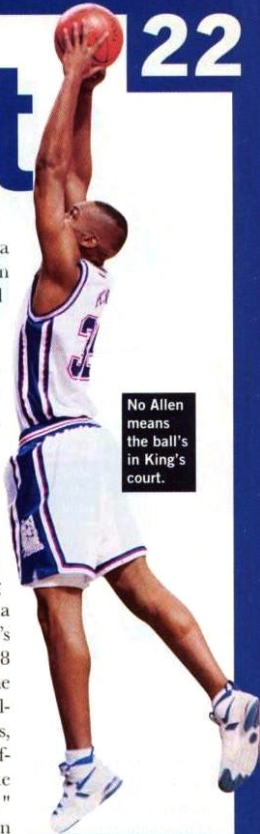
Much of the upfront firepower figures to come from a trio of blue-chip freshmen. Six-foot-six Richard Hamilton already carries advance billing as The Next Ray Allen. That's a heavy load, but the McDonald's All-American, who averaged 23.8 points and 14 rebounds per game as a schoolboy, has broad shoulders. Six-foot-nine Sam Funches, a forward, is an electric out-of-the-gym leaper whose favorite hobby is blocking shots. And 6'11" Jake Voskuhl pulled down an astonishing 15.1 rebounds per game last year.

The Huskies will need all that youthful muscle in the middle, having lost most of their shot-blocking (115 of 190 swats) to graduation.

LOWDOWN

Mush, Mush

Solid as they figure to be, the Huskies' devastating domination of the Big East—three titles, 49-5 over the last three years—is over, at least for now. Villanova and Syracuse are the teams to beat, and UConn doesn't have the goods to do it. Still, freshmen seem to grow up pretty fast these days. By March, the revamped, rebuilding, rejuvenated Huskies just might be ready to start a ruckus at the prom. And if not this year, then certainly next, because this is a program that's here to stay.



No Allen means the ball's in King's court.

SCHEDULE

Features the long-awaited matchup all of New England wanted—last year. Okay, better late than never: UConn vs. UMass, Christmas week in Hartford. Be there. This high-pressure game, the Jan. 19 home game vs. our No. 1 Kansas, and a killer league slate should toughen the young UConn squad for postseason play. No matter the outcomes, count on Jim Calhoun keeping their confidence up.

LAST SEASON

32-3

boston college



SCHEDULE

BC has a tasty selection of nonconference cupcakes in **Brown**, **New Hampshire**, **Holy Cross**, **Central Connecticut**, and **Fairfield**. But **Vanderbilt** at home Dec. 9 and **Louisville** on the road Dec. 29 will toughen the Eagles up for the state championship game—**UMass**, Jan. 18, in the FleetCenter.

LAST SEASON

19-11

Georgetown...Syracuse...UConn...Villanova. You start making up a list of year-in, year-out, take-no-prisoners powerhouses in the Big East, those are the names that come to mind, right?

Well, how about the only Big East team returning all five starters? A team that earned its second NCAA bid in three years? A team with the best power forward in the conference (if not the nation), last season's rookie of the year, and the league's co-coach of the year? We're talking *Boston College*, okay?

This year, the Eagles are poised to make a serious run at the Big East title—and at a little shot of the respect they deserve.

Don't think so? Then meet Danya Abrams. At 6'7" and 265 pounds, that's *Mister Abrams* to you. Last season, BC's captain led by example with a team-leading 19.6 points and 9.6 rebounds per game.

Still not convinced? Okay, then say hello to 5'10" sophomore guard James "Scoonie" Penn. A local boy—by way of Salem, Mass.—Scoonie was unanimously voted rookie of the year last season after starting 30 games, filling it up (13.2 points), and dishing it out (3.6 assists). Among the rookie candidates he beat out: Georgetown's Victor Page, Miami's Tim James, and Providence's God Shammgod.

Entering his 11th season at his alma mater, resilient head coach Jim O'Brien, who shared Big East Coach of the Year honors with UConn's Jim Calhoun, also returns his three other starters—forward Keenan Jourdon, off-guard Duane Woodward, and swingman Antonio Granger.

Remember Jack and the Beanstalk? We say BC has a legit shot at knocking off the giants of the Big East for its first conference title since 1983.

THE PLAYERS

Balance of Power

For the first time in a long time, there appears to be a harmonious frontcourt-backcourt balance to BC's roster. But that could be disrupted somewhat when Penn sits out the first five games (including back-to-back

RECRUITING GRADE

O'Brien had but one scholarship to give, and it went to **Damien Foster**, a 6'5", high-scoring shooting guard out of Buffalo. On a sunnier note, next year's class is shaping up as a good one, with commitments from three promising frontcourt players and another local guard, South Boston's **Jonathan DePina**. If BC blossoms this year, that crop could swell.

conference games against Rutgers and at UConn) because of academic deficiencies.

Junior Duane Woodward, whose erratic play during his sophomore campaign prompted Penn's rapid promotion to point guard, has to pick up the slack. So does junior swingman Granger, a dangerous (if streaky) scorer (10.6 ppg) from anywhere on the floor. Sophomore guard Andy Bedard, a 6'1" penetrator whose shooting touch and scrappiness remind graybeards of O'Brien during his BC heyday, fills out the backcourt.

Of course, it helps to have *Mister Abrams* patrolling the paint, along with senior classmates

Jourdon (7.6 ppg, 5.2 rpg), whose rebounding last season was bigger than the numbers suggest, and Bevan Thomas (6.9 ppg, 4.3 rpg), who stepped up his game all around last year and will make his presence felt as a defender, scorer, and rebounder.

Last season Abrams, Jourdon, and Thomas generated 43.7 percent of BC's points and 47.2 percent of its rebounds. That's as productive, as tough, and as experienced a three-four-five combination as you'll find in any Big East frontcourt this season.

Add to that mix 6'9" junior banger Mickey Curley (5.4 ppg, 3.5 rpg), who had a team-leading 32 blocked shots last season and makes for an even more intimidating frontcourt rotation. BC also hopes to get some production off the bench from 6'10" sophomore Kostas Maglos, an offense-minded European player from Greece whose defensive skills last year weren't up to Big East standards, and 6'9" sophomore Nate Fox, who sat out most of last season because of academic difficulties but who has the size to play in the paint and the shooting ability to roam the wing.

LOWDOWN

Flyin' High Now

It took a last-second, game-winning, season-saving shot by Penn in the regular-season finale against Rutgers to get BC into the NCAA Tournament last year. The Eagles won't face such a close call this season. The team that advanced to the second round last year should get at least that far this spring. And, if O'Brien keeps his players focused, maybe even farther.

purdue

Quick—what do you call it if a team wins four consecutive Big Ten championships? Around West Lafayette, Ind., where the local school's mascot is named Purdue Pete, they've come up with "Four-Pete." Get it?

No matter. Somehow we don't think anybody's going to cash in big by trademarking *that* one.

Odds are, nobody'll have the chance, because no Big Ten team has ever won four consecutive titles. But nobody expected the Boilermakers to take the conference the past three seasons, either. How many times does Gene Keady—who last year won both Big Ten coach of the year (for a league-record sixth time) and national coach of the year—have to hurdle expectations before they're raised?

Making history won't be easy for a team trying to replace six departed seniors, four of whom were starters. But by now, people should know better than to count out the Boilermakers just because they have a hole or two to fill. And in a basketball conference that's neither Big nor Ten, somebody has to win it, Four-Pete's sake.

THE PLAYERS

Chad & Brad Show

Glenn Robinson...Cuonzo Martin...Chad Austin: the Boilermakers had a different go-to guy for each of their titles. The one constant was point guard Porter Roberts, a poised field general who's now marching up and down courts in Europe.

The challenge of replacing him falls to sophomore Alan Eldridge. At 6'1", he's a three-point threat with a quick first step, but he still

RECRUITING GRADE

F/G Michael Robinson earned All-America honors after averaging 30-plus points and double-digit rebounds as a junior and senior in Peoria. **G Jamaan Cornell** was rated a top-50 recruit. Powerful 6'8" **F Gary McQuay** (14.1 ppg, 9.3 rpg) will see action early. **Gs Mosi Baines**, a redshirt candidate, and walk-on **B.J. Carretta** could help down the road.

has to prove he can handle pressure as well as he handles the ball.

Austin's ball-handling and passing skills take some of that pressure off Eldridge. But Keady prefers using his 6'2" junior stand-out at shooting guard, where he led Purdue's balanced offense with a 12.8 scoring average last season. Can't blame the coach: Austin hit a league-best 44.6 percent of his three-point shots, the most dramatic of which fell with 13 seconds left to beat Indiana.

Center Brad Miller, who averaged 9.6 points off the bench, has all the tools for stardom except one: self-discipline. The 6'11", 240-pound junior's predisposition for late-night TV and skipping meals didn't serve him well last season. Nor did his team-high 86 personal fouls. Still, he has the size and mobility to be the conference's dominant big man—if he wants it enough.

Fade to green. With power forward Luther Clay having headed off to Rhode Island, 6'8" freshman Gary McQuay has to grow up quickly. The only player besides Miller resembling a power forward, he needs to provide immediate help in the rebounding and shot-blocking departments.

Junior David Lesmond will see

time at small forward, as will red-shirt freshman Brian Cardinal, who just had his knee scoped. Each has shown a modicum of promise. But some true freshmen need to catch on fast for the Boilermakers to contend again.

The best bet is 6'6" swingman Michael Robinson, a big-time recruit who appears to have the talent and maturity to deliver on his advance notices. He averaged 30.2 points as a high school senior, can direct-dial from long distance, and has the all-round savvy of a grizzled vet.

Fellow freshman Jamaan Cornell, a blue-collar player whom Keady considers the nation's best freshman two guard, will get major minutes behind Austin but needs to improve his jumper.

LOWDOWN

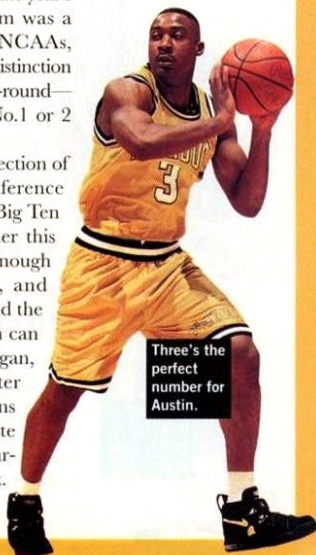
Could Happen

Back when a Big Ten championship meant something, Purdue's quest for a Four-Pete would have been a bigger deal. All last year's championship got them was a No. 1 seeding in the NCAAs, which earned them the distinction of exiting in the second-round—faster than any other No. 1 or 2 seed in the tournament.

But this is more a reflection of the caliber of the conference than of the team. The Big Ten doesn't look any tougher this year, and Purdue has enough shooting, athleticism, and coaching savvy to defend the title. If this young team can gel quickly, and if Michigan, Indiana, and Iowa falter just a little, look for fans wearing those Four-Pete shirts at the NCAA Tournament. Just don't blink.

SCHEDULE

For a team nicknamed the Boilermakers, Purdue sure plays its share of patsies before getting down to Big Ten play. But they do have a few challenges along the way to keep things interesting: **Kentucky** in the Great Eight tournament (Dec. 3), **Louisville** in Indianapolis, and road trips to **Oklahoma** and **Texas Christian**.



indiana

SCHEDULE

The Hoosiers have to deal with **Connecticut**, the preseason NIT, and **Kentucky** in the early going, so it won't take long to find out if Indiana is making a comeback or continuing a slow fade. Hoosier fans are praying that history doesn't repeat in the five games against archrivals **Purdue, Kentucky, and Michigan**: in their last 17 games against that trio, Indiana is 5-12.

LAST SEASON

19-12

For more than a quarter of a century, Bob Knight's been both a brilliant coach and a bully. Now, say the whispers, he's just a bully. You'd be strangled with the nearest red sweater for saying such a thing too loudly in Hoosierland. But we say the General is pulling a MacArthur and fading away. Consider:

- For the first time ever under Knight, Indiana failed to win at least 20 games in consecutive seasons (19-12 both years).
- Indiana's been jettisoned in the first round of the NCAA Tournament two years running, both times by lower-seeded teams.
- Players stay in Bloomington about as long as travelers in an airline hub. The latest to fly out were juco transfers Lou Moore and Chris Rowles; Sherron Wilkerson was dismissed for disciplinary reasons.
- Knight's Hoosiers have never gone four straight seasons without a Big Ten title, but that's the possibility—the likelihood—they're facing this year. (And face it, this has been a lousy league recently.)

Okay, so the Hoosiers might just pull it off if they dig deep, max out at every position, and draw strength from their valorous past. They've got a fighting chance—and a renowned fighter to kick them if they stumble.

THE PLAYERS

Missing in Action

The Genny won't be busted down to buck private right away, but he faces battles on several fronts to overcome lost ground. Three juniors must move fast to avoid being labeled underachievers.

Andrae Patterson, Charlie Miller, and Neil Reed were highly recruited and remain highly talented, but their first two years were, at times, underwhelming.

Patterson holds the key to the season. The 6'8", 230-pound forward's averages of 11.3 points and

de, but he needs to fill out his own beanpole frame, as well.

Three of Collier's freshman classmates—Michael Lewis, A.J. Guyton, and Luke Jimenez—had better be ready to contribute early and often. That's because Reed is the team's only other true guard.

The rest of Knight's bench consists of large bodies and small ability. Haris Mujezinovic, Richard Mandeville, Robbie Eggers, and Larry Richardson stand, collectively, 27'3", but last season they scored, combined, just 11.6 points a game.

LOWDOWN

Indiana Groans

As always, the Hoosiers will put up a helluva fight—they're afraid not to. But this is a team riddled with question marks. There isn't a go-to guy in the bunch. Knight's hoping that Patterson will show some moxie, but there's little evidence to suggest he will. The eight returnees often played out of position last year and need to prove themselves anew. Of the four freshmen, only Collier could have a major early impact. Defense improved last season, but the frontcourt is thin. Don't look for a personality transformation from Knight this late in the game. And don't expect him to relinquish the reins anytime soon. That's fine, provided he can still command respect without resorting to terror tactics. Don't hold your breath. Bottom line: The General can still attract talent and motivate the timid—at least to a point. If everything breaks right, the Hoosiers could make a nuisance of themselves at the Big Dance. If not, they're wallflowers who go home early again.

RECRUITING GRADE

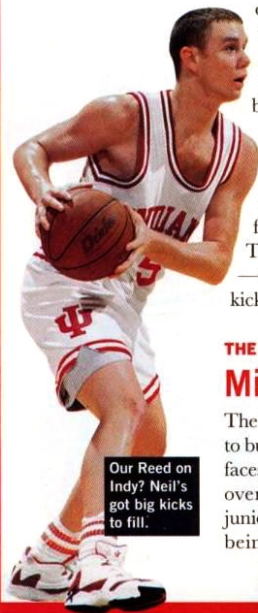
Jason Collier, a McDonald's All-American, is the real deal: he adds grit and gumption to an otherwise standoffish frontline. He's also reliable for more than a couple of treys. Of the three backcourt newcomers, Michael Lewis has the best shooting touch. It's a leap of faith, however, to presume that A.J. Guyton and invited walk-on Luke Jimenez are enough to push Reed and buffer the defense.

6.2 rebounds per game must increase handsomely for the Hoosiers to make much noise in March. Turning up the volume on the court is one thing. Leading a team of unprovens at the same time is something else.

Miller moves to forward where he, too, could benefit from a quickie assertiveness training course. Point guard Reed assumes even more playmaking responsibilities, now that conference MVP Brian Evans has departed for the Magic Kingdom. The loss of Evans hurts. Miller and Reed combined contributed fewer points (18.7), rebounds (6.4), and blocks (0.5) than Evans did alone.

On the sunny side, freshman center Jason Collier is a shot-blocking, basket-stuffing, seven-foot, 235-pound blue-chipper who looks like Knight's best center prospect since Dean Garrett manned the post for the 1987 national champs. He'll get a crack at filling the mid-

Our Reed on Indy? Neil's got big kicks to fill.



Louisville

Somewhere, probably in Stillwater, Eddie Sutton is smiling. Louisville loyalists wanted to nail his hide to the nearest barn when, during his reign as Kentucky coach, he had the nerve to refer to the Louisville basketball program as Kentucky's "little brother."

But in case you hadn't noticed—and you can bet Sutton has—the Wildcats' national title run capped a five-year stretch that saw Kentucky crash the Final Eight four times and the Final Four twice. Meanwhile, the Cardinals remain stuck on 16—as in, haven't been beyond the Sweet 16 since 1986.

The Cards had their chance to play Kentucky in the Midwest Regional final last March, but were stopped—in the Round of 16, of course—by Wake Forest. Maybe that was a good thing. The Cards have beaten the Cats only once in the last six seasons.

Just as bad, Little Brother has behaved like he needs some guidance: a string of players lost to academic problems, plus a Sept. 21 inquiry by the NCAA infractions committee regarding 10 possible rule violations that could result in penalties. A ruling is expected before the end of the season. The most serious allegations concern a pair of sporty vehicles driven last season by then-star center, Samaki Walker.

Walker might get Louisville some time in the NCAA's Big House, but he's no longer in the Cards' house. He split two years early for the NBA draft, where Dallas snapped him up. The Louisville frontcourt was further depleted when Jason Osborne, a former Kentucky Mr. Basketball and top-10 recruit, became an academic casualty last year, then

RECRUITING GRADE

There's no dead-solid cinch in this four-player class. But there is one newcomer with a link to Louisville's finest hour: **Nate Johnson** is the best player the Cards have landed from Camden (N.J.) High School since **Milt Wagner**, **Billy Thompson**, and **Kevin Walls** took them to the 1986 NCAA title. He's a narrow, 6'6" forward with a sweet baseline jumper.

announced he wouldn't be back for his senior season.

Given the defections and the good-but-not-great material Denny Crum has to work with, Louisville needs to get very lucky to make it to the Sweet 16 this year, much less past it. Meanwhile, Big Brother looks like a Final Four team again.

Hey, Eddie Sutton told us so.

THE PLAYERS

High-Grade Wheat

You hear all this yakking about Jacques Vaughn and Brevin Knight and Kiwane Garriss, but what about DeJuan Wheat?

The most prolific point guard in Cardinals history, Wheat does tend to take care of himself first: almost 18 points but only four assists a game last year. He's a cinch to finish no worse than No. 3 on the Cards' career scoring list. In fact, if he boosts his per-game output by five points, he'll pass Darrell Griffith and become their all-time leading scorer. Don't bet against it.

Wheat gets good help in the backcourt from Eric Johnson, back from a knee injury and ready to fly on the fast break, and from B.J. Flynn, as relentless—and as fearless—as any backup point guard

who's battled for the top job.

Now that Brian Kiser's sweet three-point stroke is gone, Alvin Sims gets more minutes in the backcourt. One NBA scout compared the 6'4", 220-pound Sims to a "miniature Charles Barkley." Must've happened after Sims hammered down one of his 48 dunks on a taller defender last season. The guy thinks he owns the rack.

As you'd expect from a mini-Barkley, Sims can also play small forward. That's the Cards' strongest and deepest position, with Damion Dantzler showing an improved jumper and Nate Johnson bringing his 31-point and 13-rebound high school averages.

Maybe this is the year Alex Sanders puts some power in the power forward spot. Sanders wasn't academically qualified to play as a freshman, and he couldn't get eligible as a sophomore. But he's still trying, and the Cards expect his lefthanded jumper and massive biceps to be available.

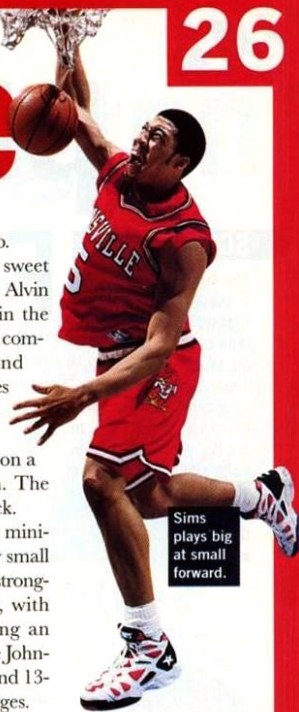
Beau Zach Smith (6'8", 230) doesn't look like much at center, but guess what? He started the last 16 games because of the uncertainty surrounding Walker, and the Cards went 10-6, beating UCLA, Cincinnati, and Memphis. Beau Zach can board.

LOWDOWN

Awaiting the Ruling

If the NCAA goes easy, if everybody (especially Sanders) is eligible, and if Wheat stays healthy, this is not a team you want to play in March. But if any of those ifs go the other way, the Cards won't have to worry about that Sweet 16 rut this season.

They won't get that far.



SCHEDULE

The toughest in the country? Could be. The Cards play **Louisiana State**, **Purdue**, **Arkansas**, **Boston College**, **Kentucky**, **Georgia Tech**, **Texas**, and **UCLA**—plus they have regular Conference USA brawls with **Cincinnati**, **Marquette**, **Memphis**, and **Tulane**. They may not make the Sweet 16, but they'll sure be playing a lot of Sweet 16 teams.

LAST SEASON

22-12

providence

SCHEDULE

The Friars begin the year in the Top of the World Classic in Alaska. They then tangle with Wisconsin in Madison and Texas at home. A trip to Loyola-Marymount brings Croshere home to L.A. In the Big East, Providence can't afford to repeat last year's 1-5 combined mark against Villanova, Georgetown, Syracuse, and UConn.

LAST SEASON

18-12

Friars coach Pete Gillen comes from the "scorched-earth" school of hoops: in-your-shorts defense, a straggling full-court press, a scattered, manic pace. "Up-tempo" for some teams would be "slow down" for a Gillen team. Think controlled fury—and crank it up a notch.

In his first two seasons at Providence, though, Gillen had to temper his style because the Friars were depleted by graduation (10 departures in two years). The talent drain was so severe that at times Gillen even resorted to tagads!—a zone defense. Even so, Providence has 35 wins in two years and two straight NIT appearances. Not bad for most coaches, but hardly a prize for Gillen, who took Xavier to seven NCAA Tournaments in nine seasons.

Now Gillen has a Friars team he can truly call his own. The roster is studded with quick, versatile, feisty guys who can hank the coach's scheme. With a crackerjack point guard, a stack of quality forwards, and a trio of talented newcomers, Gillen can unleash a 10-deep rotation on opponents. Last season, the Friars finished ninth in the Big East in scoring defense (allowing 75 points per game) and last in opponents' field goal percentage (.478). Rest assured, we've seen the last of those numbers, as well as PC's relegation to the NIT.

THE PLAYERS

Praise Shamm

The ball belongs to God Shammgod (teammates call him Shamm), a six-foot soph point guard with a game that's simply divine.

Last year, Shammgod averaged 9.6 points per game and set freshman PC and Big East marks for assists (6.5 per game). His .336 shooting was due more to gluttonous shot selection than to a faulty eye. The Friars had an 8-3 run near the end of '96. In four of those games—three of them wins—Shamm hit double digits in assists. When Shammgod blesses

the U.S. 22-and-under squad.

Opposite Croshere is small forward Derrick Brown. Nicknamed "Flight" ("Air" was taken), Brown is a terrific inside/outside complement—14.8 points, 6.8 rebounds per—with kangaroo springs. And at 6'6", he can play guard, where he smothers smaller opponents.

Juco transfer Abdul Brown, a JC All-League choice last season at College of Southern Idaho, gives the Friars versatility at forward and center. The 6'9", 235-pounder is a passionate rebounder who'll give Croshere, who tends to tire, welcome support. Sophomore Llewellyn Cole, a top recruit in '95, has bulked up and will sub at both forward spots.

At center, 6'9" senior Ruben Garces is rough offensively but is a predator on the glass, averaging 7.5 rebounds in 22 minutes last season. Only a repeat of last year's foul trouble can keep Garces from snatching 10 boards per game.

Behind Garces is string bean-like 7'1", 215-pound Senegalese freshman Ndongo N'Diaye ("Don-go En-jai," if you're reading aloud). If he isn't shoved off the court, N'Diaye will hand-stamp a lot of balls "Return to Sender."

LOWDOWN

A Friars Roast

The way the Friars see it, only a loss in their final regular-season game cost them an NCAA bid. The way we see it, seniors Croshere, Derrick Brown, Murdock, and Garces are solid, while sophomores Shammgod and Thomas are real comers. If Gillen gets the Friars to play his brand of D, Providence will make some higher seeds miserable in March.

RECRUITING GRADE

This class lacks last year's top-five tinsel, but 6'9" Abdul Brown, a fierce rebounder, was a nice catch. A 7'1" swizzle stick from Senegal, Ndongo N'Diaye needs nourishing, both nutritionally and athletically. Corey Wright, all of 5'8", is said to be even quicker than God Shammgod. Forward Kofi Pointer is the single incoming freshman.

his mates, Providence is better off.

At shooting guard, Gillen divides playing time between senior defensive stopper Jason Murdock, who starts, and Jamel Thomas, a dynamite sophomore swingman who averaged 9.3 points and 4.6 rebounds in only 21 minutes a game (he also stuck 37.5 percent of his treys). When Gillen wants to floor it, sophomore Corey Wright (14 assists a game as a juco freshman), academically grounded last season, can play point and Shammgod can indulge himself at two guard.

Up front, Austin Croshere is a power player who also can fill it up from downtown. The 6'9", 225-pound senior forward led Providence in scoring (15.3) and was third in rebounding (5.8). Croshere spent his second consecutive off-season playing internationally, this summer as a member of

Shammgod's game is truly Providential.

george washington

One warning if you're interested in seeing George Washington's best player in action: by the time you learn how to pronounce everyone else's name on the roster, Alexander Koul has probably fouled out.

Coach Mike Jarvis has taken the long journey from D.C. to Minsk, scouring gyms throughout Belarus and eastern Europe to bring home some international talent. No fewer than four players from the former Soviet Union now dress in Colonial Buff & Blue. Add the players from Portugal, Holland, and Quebec, and you get a good start on a United Nations roll call, as well as the roster of the defending Atlantic 10 West Division co-champions.

Jarvis' most valuable import is the 7'1", 285-pound Koul, one of the nation's better big men despite his propensity for foul trouble. With two years of college ball under his signature white headband, the former A-10 rookie of the year looks to make GW "The School of Koul." That's when he's still on the floor.

GW gave up a 17-point lead in the final eight minutes in losing to Iowa in the NCAA Tournament—and the "Belarusian Bully" (guess it depends on your perspective) fouled out during the final key moments. During the Colonials' regular-season upset of UMass, he got Marcus Camby's attention early with two blocks, helped hold him to 8 of 21 from the field, and managed 7 of 10 shooting himself—before, you guessed it, fouling out after 21 minutes.

Luckily, Jarvis has experience mentoring big men. He coached Patrick Ewing in high school and Yinka Dare at GW.

RECRUITING GRADE

The incoming class is headlined by 6'7" forward Patrick Ngongba, an impact player out of Calvert Hall School in Ellicott City, Md. But he's academically ineligible this season. Watch 6'9" forward Francisco de Miranda from the Holland junior national team. Jackson Payne, a 6'4" freshman guard, played a year behind GW's Brade at St. Thomas More (Conn.) School. Kinte Smith, a 6'3" guard out of Cape Henry Va. Collegiate School, rounds out the class.

THE PLAYERS

Little Big Man

George Washington should work its way to the top again with the hyperkinetic play of 5'3" Shawnta Rogers and Koul, but without the presence of co-captain Kwame Evans, who spoke the language of the perimeter J fluently.

Sophomore Rogers became the starting point guard in just his third game last season and shocked opponents with his deft ball-handling and passing—not to mention his assist to turnover ratio (better than 2 to 1), his in-your-pocket D, and his 4.7 rebounds per game, third-highest on the team. Offensively, his ability to penetrate, coupled with a respectable jumper and bonsai-high dribble, gives guys fits.

Koul's size and balanced attack, with Rogers' lack of size but presence of mind, make GW a nightmare to match up against. Bookending Koul in the frontcourt are Belarussian comrade Yegor Mescheriakov and junior Darin Green, both of whom had off-season surgery. Mescheriakov, a 6'8", 230-pound sophomore, helps Koul on the glass. He also averaged just

under 10 points a game and gives Jarvis an additional baseline scoring threat. The 6'5" Green played sparingly last year, but should start at the three spot. He'll have to pick up some of the scoring that Evans, who led the team in scoring 13 times, took with him.

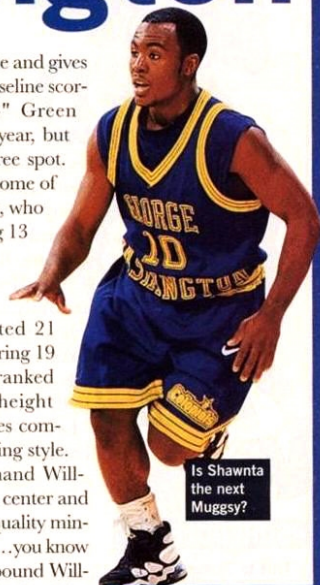
Sophomore J.J. Brade is a 6'5" slashing guard who started 21 games last season, scoring 19 points against 19th-ranked Maryland. Brade's height and one-on-one moves complement Rogers' darting style.

Lone senior Ferdinand Williams backs up Koul at center and will undoubtedly see quality minutes because of Koul's...you know why. The 6'10", 245-pound Williams adds veteran leadership. Other returnees include junior guard and forgotten man Rasheed Hazzard, sophomore guard Seco Camara, Andrei Sviridov, a seven-footer returning from injury, and Andrei Krivonos, a defensive-minded sophomore two guard.

LOWDOWN

Hoops Spoken Here

GW has an excellent shot for a return visit to the NCAA Tournament, where it went last year with an at-large bid. Rogers and Koul are the linchpins here. Rogers needs to make this young team his. Koul must improve his rebounding numbers (7.8 per game) and stay in the game long enough to continue working that baby hook shot into his dunk-heavy offense. Jarvis' aspirations, however, could be dashed without senior experience. If GW stumbles out of the blocks, will his young players be able to shake it off and focus down the stretch?



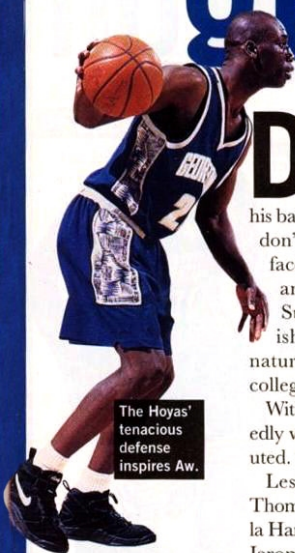
SCHEDULE

Now in his seventh season at George Washington, Jarvis likes to schedule tough out-of-conference opponents. "We're trying to build a program, and to do that you have to play on TV," he says. His team hosts Texas Tech on Nov. 30, plays Mississippi State in the opening round of the Franklin National Bank Classic on Dec. 8, then travels to Kansas three days later before opening its A-10 schedule against Fordham on Jan. 4.

LAST SEASON

21-8

georgetown



The Hoyas' tenacious defense inspires Aw.

SCHEDULE

True to Thompson's time-tested philosophy, the Hoyas face the customary collection of nonconference cream puffs (Army, Cleveland State). The only significant test comes against UMass on Dec. 4, a primer for the murderous Big East slate, which kicks off at Rutgers on Dec. 7. If they can survive their own league, the youthful Hoyas will be well-prepared for crunchtime.

Don't worry, we're not about to tell you the Hoyas are better off without Allen Iverson. They're not. All his ball-hogging and brick-laying don't really mean much in the face of 25 points, 4.7 assists, and 3.8 rebounds a game. Sure, Bubbachuck was selfish. He was also the most naturally gifted athlete in the college game.

Without him, the ball undoubtedly will be more widely distributed. The question is, to whom?

Lest we forget, coach John Thompson also lost center Othella Harrington and power forward Jerome Williams to the NBA. They combined with Iverson for 47.5 points and 19.5 rebounds a game. That's 57 percent of the team's scoring and 44 percent of its rebounding, not to mention 51 percent of its steals and assists.

Anywhere else, (except maybe Lexington, Durham, or Chapel Hill) such devastation would result in total collapse. But as long as Thompson towers over the bench, Georgetown will always play harder and lay a nastier D in your face than any other college team in captivity. And if the other team can't score—are you sitting down?—they can't win.

THE PLAYERS

Whoyas?

This year's go-to guy is 6'3" soph muscleman Victor Page, a guy so talented that he somehow managed to shine even with Iverson practically eating the ball. Page was unstoppable in the Big East and NCAA tournaments, showing a clutch side while smoothly beating pressure, making the right decisions, and shooting the ball

with amazing accuracy and range. Plus, he's a Georgetown-type defender through and through.

The Hoyas may have themselves an equally powerful force inside in 6'9", 290-pound Jahidi White, the widebody to end all widebodies. Not much more than the (rather large) butt of jokes as a 300-plus-pound freshman, the newly svelte White put together

RECRUITING GRADE

All four signees are easily adaptable to playing a number of positions. Forward **Shamel Jones** (6'9") and potential point guard **Ed Sheffey** should find a way into the regular rotation. **Sherard Long** and 6'8" **Rhese Gibson** are the future underneath.

some impressive performances and led the team in rebounding in the opening rounds of the Tournament. In only 11 minutes a game last season, he ripped down 3.7 boards, which should translate into three times that many as a starter.

Much more is expected, at least offensively, of 6'7" small forward Boubacar Aw, who may be the best defensive player in the big-D Big East. He started all 37 games last year, shooting 51 percent from the floor. Too bad he launched fewer than four shots a game.

Senior Ya-Ya Dia, the team's two-year captain, starts at power forward. His long arms and tight springs make him a strong rebounder and shot-blocker (24 rejects in only 12.8 mpg), but he, too, is unproven on offense, averaging just 2.9 points per outing.

Promising 6'2" sophomore Joseph Toumoum looks to be the starter at point this year. An electrifying defender, Toumoum is the

passer Iverson wasn't. He played in all 37 games as a freshman, and could be the surprise Thompson is waiting to unleash on the rest of the conference.

The identity of the Hoya starters is not that important, as Big John plans to return to the pre-Iverson days of winning with defense and depth. Skinny-but-strong senior Godwin Owinje should be the first frontcourter off the bench, and three veterans will see plenty of time in the backcourt. Six-foot-four Jerry Nichols, not much of a ball-handler but deadly at long range (36.7 percent), and 6'4" soph Daymond Jackson, a diamond in the rough who can get to the hole, give Thompson options at the two. Freshman Ed Sheffey out of Oak Hill Academy has the goods to run the point.

Top recruit Shamel Jones is expected to have a fast impact. The 6'9" Brooklynite averaged 22 points and 10 rebounds in the nation's toughest high school league. A few more inches, and he's the next great Hoya big man.

LOWDOWN

Giant Shoulders

Always defensively dominating, Georgetown will be as unpleasant to face as ever. But Thompson doesn't have nearly as much talent as he's used to. The loss of Iverson is not as devastating as the loss of Harrington and Williams. Page and White will need to carry the offensive load, and freshman Jones will be asked to play at a higher level than he may be ready to.

With all these holes, a trip to the second round will be a minor miracle. With Thompson at the helm, we're expecting nothing less.

LAST SEASON

29-8

temple

John Chaney's Owls rarely deviate from the script. They annually play one of the more ambitious schedules in the country. They often look dazed at the offensive end, but their suffocating matchup zone keeps them in most games. At midseason, they teeter on the NCAA bubble. Then it's winning time. Who cares if the winning is generally ugly?

This year the Owls face some twists in the plot. Only three players—all in the frontcourt—return from last season's band of over-achievers who won seven of their last eight, then dismembered Oklahoma in the Southeast Regional.

That leaves the backcourt to three rookies and a redshirt sophomore. Chaney is counting on them to intensify Temple's perimeter play and adjust to a protect-the-ball offense. That's asking a lot.

To make matters worse, the sudden off-season death of longtime assistant Jim Maloney creates an enormous void. Chaney's voice of reason and backcourt guru, Maloney would have been the perfect tutor for a team full of recruits.

Chaney has been to the Big Dance 12 of the last 14 years with only four high school All-Americans. And one of them, shooting guard Johnny Miller, just transferred to Clemson. This season won't differ from the high-wire walks of previous years. Oh, there is one difference: this year Chaney does it without a net.

THE PLAYERS

Guard Derail

Chaney has always relied on his guards for leadership. This season, with all the backcourt newcomers, all-conference center Marc Jackson takes the reins.

RECRUITING GRADE

The freshman class should be the nucleus of a top-10 run within two years. The seven rookies include four guards. **Juan Sanchez** and **Quincy Wadley** are the most promising—if Wadley gets his grades up. **Lamont Barnes**, a first-team all-state power forward, needs mass. Small forward **Julian Dunkley** is a three-point threat.

He can handle it. The 6'10", 270-pound junior averaged 15-plus points and nine rebounds in his first year as an Owl. Not too shabby for a guy whose vertical leap measures about half his sneaker size. Under the basket, though, Jackson was virtually invisible, with an embarrassing seven blocks in 32 starts last year.

Beyond Jackson there's not much beef down low. Power forward Lamont Barnes, a Top 25 talent out of Kentucky, has to bulk up his 6'9", 215-pound frame to do much intimidating.

The same could be said for the defense in general. Last season, no team was stingier on defense than the Owls, whose opponents managed just 38.5 percent from the field. This season that stat events out, at least until all the new players get up to speed in Chaney's rough-and-tumble system.

The two other incumbents, 6'7" forwards Huey Futch and Lynard Stewart, didn't exactly shine last year. The sixth man and full-timer averaged just seven points each, part of the reason the Owls were 12th in the conference in scoring. Both Futch and Stewart need to get hungry for the ball defensively, too. Combined, they contributed only 7.7 rebounds.

They get help from newcomer

Julian Dunkley. The Cherry Hill, N.J., star forward comes advertised as the perimeter threat Temple lacked a year ago.

The backcourt is the cornerstone of Chaney's system. Yet that's where the mystery lies. Miller won't be missed. He was out half the season, and the Owls looked better without him.

Chaney will be scratching for a replacement. Sophomore Rashed Brokenborough, an academic casualty last season, was the Philly player of the year in 1995. The 6'3" guard can pass and penetrate—sounds like a point guard to us.

Two freshmen, Argentina's Juan "Pepe" Sanchez and Quincy Wadley, can shoot a little—hopefully enough so that they'll share the two spot. That's if Wadley finds some credits he lost when switching high schools a few years back.

And if those guys can't hack it, you *know* Chaney will find somebody who can.

LOWDOWN

Green Play

The Owls are used to scraping their way to the Dance. But only three guys remember what it takes to get there. This team needs guidance and confidence. Jackson helps in the locker room, but he has his own problems on the court.

Patience has never been John Chaney's strong suit, and he'll need a ton of it this year. But he's a guy who can also stir things around, shake 'em if he has to, until he gets the right mix. We say Temple gets stirred and shaken into postseason play.

SCHEDULE

Most of Temple's A-10 games won't be as tough as tits intrasquad scrimmages. Good thing, because Villanova, Kansas, and Cincinnati (which has beaten the Owls four times in the last two seasons) all visit Temple in December. And going to UMass (Feb. 14) isn't anyone's idea of a winter vacation.

LAST SEASON

20-13



As the wise old Owl, Futch has to play smarter.

tennessee

SCHEDULE

Not a lot of sex appeal, but that fits. This is a program still upgrading what had been bag-over-the-head talent. The Vols play five straight December games (three at home) against relative peers: Penn State, Memphis, USC, Miami (Fla.), and UNC-Charlotte. Those could be swing games when it comes to handing out post-season bids.

How persuasive, obsessive, and combative a recruiter is Kevin O'Neill? You get the feeling that if he had been in charge of enlistments during the Vietnam War, nobody would have gone to Canada. *Seriously, son—Southeast Asia is lovely this time of year. Great place to catch rays.*

The Volunteers' coach is a recruiting fanatic—a letter-writing, phone-schmoozing, Type-A who approaches that most difficult, disdainful part of college basketball coaching with a simple philosophy: if it's worth doing, it's worth overdoing.

Why write a recruit weekly when you can write him daily? Why call his coach tomorrow when you can call him today? Why sit in a gym for one game when there's a doubleheader across town?

This season, the third-year Tennessee coach has a class of serious players ready to play. Perhaps the bitter memories from the 11-16 season two years ago will be erased once the NCAA bids go out.

THE PLAYERS

A Bonanza

Nosed out at the wire by Rick Pitino in 1995 for Nashville's Ron Mercer, O'Neill probably got mad—and, this year, he certainly got even. He hauled in a class generally ranked in the nation's top five. He beat Kentucky for 6'10" Nashville star Charles Hathaway and 6'9" Kentuckian Isaiah Victor, beat Kansas for 6'8" Chattanooga C.J. Black, and beat Michigan State for 6'2" junior college guard DaShay Jones.

Expect those four to inject badly needed athleticism and talent sooner rather than later to a roster that includes six sophomores.

That's it. There are no scholarship seniors, and Jones is the only junior. The rest were lost in the purge the coach conducted to rid the program of Wade Houston's holdovers.

RECRUITING GRADE

O'Neill has taken control of the state again with the signings of **Charles Hathaway**, and **C.J. Black**. Slender forward **Isiah Victor** of Hopkinsville, Ky., is a prize because of his versatility, while **DaShay Jones** will be the team's starting lead guard. At 6'4", **Cornelius Jackson** of Oak Hill, W. Va., can play several positions. A late signee, **Vegas Davis**, of Parker, Ariz., is 6'3" and can shoot from the perimeter—and rebound.

The first task in fleeing the Southeastern Conference's Eastern Division basement will be replacing the 18.2 points and league-leading 9.4 rebounds per game of Steve Hamer. Despite regular rippings from his coach for perceived timidity, the seven-foot center led the Vols in scoring or rebounding 20 times and was the Boston Celtics' second-round pick.

Hathaway gets first crack at Hamer's spot. A 250-pounder with soft hands and touch, he averaged 21 points and 14 rebounds as a consensus high school All-American last season and was a three-time all-state player.

The forwards figure to be 6'6" sophomore Rashard Lee and 6'10" Torrey Harris, who started 23 games last year. Look for Jones and Brandon Wharton at the guards.

Black is recovering from shoul-

der surgery and should eventually start at small forward. He was one of the nation's top high school players, averaging 19.1 points 10.1 rebounds and 4.2 blocked shots. Harris started 23 games as a freshman at power forward, where he was one of the team's better defenders. Jones was a second-team juco All-American last season after averaging 20.6 points and hitting 57 percent from the field. He'll start at point guard. Wharton, a member of the SEC All-Freshman team, moves to shooting guard. The Vols' leading returning scorer (12.6) and rebounder (3.5), Wharton picked up a rep as a clutch shooter after hitting the game-winning shot in the Orange Bowl Classic and seven of 12 threes against Georgia.

O'Neill thinks Victor has the talent to play down low and on the perimeter. He averaged 18 points and 10 boards, leading his team to Kentucky's Class A championship. Look for him to start at power forward before season's end.

LOWDOWN

Young and Hungry

Last year, the unathletic, anaesthetic Vols ran O'Neill's UT record to 25-31, but they ground opponents down to their level, holding them to 63 points per and 40.5 percent field goal shooting. That counts for something, as did their NIT invite, their first postseason tournament in four years. Now that O'Neill (who received a one-year contract extension that should keep him in orange through 2001) is playing his own guys, the results should be better.

Sure they're young, but they see a big opening in a league that looks soft except at the very top.



penn state

Imagine tossing the keys for a hot rod to an anxious 16-year-old. In essence, that's what Penn State did when it tabbed assistant Jerry Dunn—then 42, old enough for driving but awfully young for head coaching—to run the show in September 1995. After riding shotgun to Bruce Parkhill for a dozen years, Dunn took Nittany Lion fans on a wild journey in his first season behind the wheel. Penn State opened with a school-record 13 straight wins and careened into the Top 25 for the first time in three decades.

Unfortunately, the rookie coach didn't know when to take his foot off the accelerator, and his weary group ran out of gas in mid-February. The rubber-legged Lions dropped five of their final eight games before an 86-80 thumping by Arkansas in the NCAAs.

While last year proved that the Nits can run with the best of the Big Ten, the idea now is to improve on the "one and Dunn" performance at the Big Dance. Injury rehab permitting, five players with starting experience could return, so the coach ought to have the horsepower for another NCAA run. He must, however, tap the pedal a little more judiciously this time.

THE PLAYERS

The Big Hurt

Dan Earl and Rahsaan Carlton grace the cover of Penn State's '96-97 media guide. Fine, but both seniors are nursing career-threatening injuries, so there have to be a lot of crossed fingers in State College. Earl, a second-team All-Big Ten point guard who led the conference in steals (1.86 per game), has a degenerative disk that prevented him from

RECRUITING GRADE

Long-limbed swingman **Greg Stevenson** is the top gun. Penn State's best all-round athlete, he figures to start at small forward if **Rahsaan Carlton** can't play. Guards **Titus Ivory** and **Ryan "Moose" Bailey** (Toby's little brother) provide depth in the backcourt.

playing in the off-season. Carlton, a 6'6" small forward with 36 career starts to his credit, has an arthritic knee that forced him to redshirt last year.

If off-season convalescence pays off and these two vets return, Penn State should contend for the Big Ten title as it did last winter. With one of them back, the Lions may finish in the upper tier. If neither can go, well, it's a good thing Northwestern is in the basement to cushion the fall.

Meanwhile, off-guard Pete Lisycky, the deadliest sharpshooter in the Big Ten as a sophomore (47.1 percent from downtown), uses his great range to compensate for a super slo-mo first step. He led the team in scoring (13.3) last winter, but if Carlton's not back to take some of the pressure off, Lisycky stands as Penn State's only scoring threat. The backcourt reserves are thin. After Earl and Lisycky, no PSU guard has any collegiate experience.

At center, 6'11" sophomore Calvin Booth has "beefed up" from 205 to 215 pounds—he's gone from reed to beanpole. Booth and his 88-inch wingspan had a Calvinizing affect on the PSU defense last season, when he swatted away a league-leading 101 shots, more than enough to make opponents believers. He'll need all the bulk he can add to

outfight Big Ten giants like Purdue's Brad Miller. Figure Booth for 10 points a game. He'll be backed up by senior Jeremy Metzger, a 6'10" widebody who brings muscle and hustle but no offense to the floor.

Phil "Big House" Williams tries to replace departed top rebounder Matt Gaudio at power forward. Unfortunately, Williams, an under-the-bucket specialist with 28 games under his belt, has been known to hit the boards and the buffet line with equal gusto. If Big House reports to camp looking more like a mansion, look for Barkley-built sophomore Jarrett Stephens to squeeze his way into the lineup. The springy 6'6", 250-pounder deserves more than the 7.5 minutes he averaged last season.

LOWDOWN

Nit-picking

Burned out from too much, too soon, the Lions hit the postseason running on fumes—mentally and physically. The Hogs exposed Penn State's lack of athleticism in the NCAAs, chasing them out in the first round. The Nits will be better this season, especially if Carlton can go. Add a healthy Dan Earl, and Dunn has a starting lineup that can compete with anybody. But even if that best-case scenario unfolds, and even if the workaholic Dunn paces his troops better, he'll be lucky to coax more than one Tournament win out of this team. Once you leave the Big Ten, there's only so far you can go with five guys.



SCHEDULE

Under Bruce Parkhill, Penn State's nonconference slate usually included a holiday tournament and seven teams from the nether regions of the polls. Jerry Dunn was more ambitious in setting his first Dance card, which includes Cal, N.C. State, Tennessee, Bradley, and Brigham Young. A solid showing against that group should bode well for the Lions.

LAST SEASON

21-7

33

tulane



Cameron steadies the Tulane backcourt.

It seemed too good to be true: five returning seniors, six consecutive postseason appearances, a veteran squad losing just one starter, a potential lottery pick at the helm.

Guess what? It was.

In September, Rayshard Allen, one of two star forwards largely responsible for Tulane's rise to national prominence, announced he would redshirt his senior season for personal reasons, taking his 13 points, 6.8 rebounds, and .575 shooting percentage along with him. Fellow forward Jerald Honeycutt has emerged as the team's leader, but when there's only one bookend, things tend to fall off the shelf in a hurry.

Big Kahuna

Honeycutt may be good enough to play for one of the NBA's worst teams next year. Last season, the 6'9" forward became the first Green Wave player to lead the team in scoring (18 per game), rebounding (7.2), and assists (3.8).

Joining Honeycutt are senior guards Chris Cameron and Correy Childs. Cameron, Tulane's starting off-guard, averaged 9.5 points and an impressive 5.1 rebounds in just 28 minutes per game. Childs, a bench player who splashed the net 52 percent of the time last season, steps in for Allen.

Junior center Lawrence "Jody" Nelson showed promise in limited action. Sophomore guard Derrick Moore, back from a knee injury, fills in for departed point guard LeVeldro Simmons.

In the NBA-pillaged college ranks, Tulane still has enough talent to compete. (Hey, so do some high school squads.) Unfortunately, the Green Wave's skills often are masked by a tendency to perform like lusty teenagers: overanxious and sloppy. Unless coach Perry Clark gets them to play under control, any early splash in the NCAAs by the Green Wave will end in a wipeout long before reaching the shores of the Sweet 16.

BOB RUSSATO

34

georgia tech



Harpring is the ACC's top big man not named Duncan.

This year's Yellow Jacket outlook is less about who's playing than who's not. With Stephon Marbury now manning the point for the Minnesota Timberwolves, Tech's chances of repeating as ACC champion and Sweet 16 entrant fall somewhere between slim and none.

Coach Bobby Cremins' immediate task is to convert a traditionally perimeter-based offense into one whose scoring comes from up front. Go-to guy Matt Harpring (18.6 points, 8.1 rebounds per game) has uncommonly versatile skills—the 6'7" junior forward finished among the top five in the ACC in scoring, rebounding, field

goal percentage, three-point shooting, and steals. At the other wing, Michael Maddox is in-and-out, but he busted nearly 43 percent of his threes last season. Center Eddie Elisma is a springy shot-blocker but still incomplete offensively, as well as unfavorably slim (210 pounds). He's Exhibit A demonstrating Tech's overall lack of muscle.

Big Shoes

Following in the footsteps of Marbury, Travis Best, Kenny Anderson, and Mark Price, 5'11" freshman Kevin Morris brings the same New York City breeding as Marbury, but far less sizzle.

Sophomore Gary Saunders, a fine shooter with good size, picks up for Marbury's departed sidekick, Drew Barry.

Along with Morris, three other recruits should see important minutes: Jon Babul and Jason Floyd, both mid-sized guard/forwards, and 6'10" freshman Pablo Machado (12 rebounds, four blocks in 18 minutes a game as a high school senior).

The Yellow Jackets face the usual hazardous lineup of ACC foes, but they still have enough to play into March. The problem is, Cremins may find his toughest opponent to be that voice whispering in his ear, "What mighta been."

BRIAN SPURLOCK

south carolina

The Gamecocks came out fighting last year and won 19 games, equal to their win total the previous two seasons put together. The reason? Coach Eddie Fogler's three-guard rotation, which led the rest of the team combined in scoring, three-point shooting, and steals—a backcourt to crow about.

Melvin Watson, Larry Davis, and B.J. McKie scored 46 points a game, and the trio returns for an encore. Six other returning lettermen and a couple of highly regarded newcomers have Cocky and the rest of the Frank McGuire Arena denizens strutting combined in anticipation of big things this season.

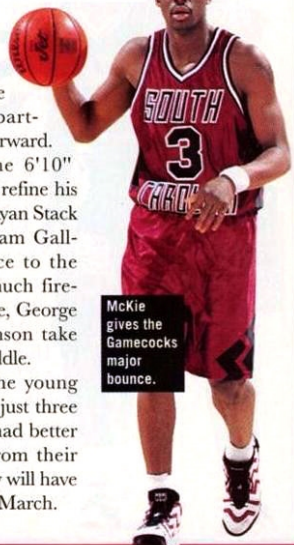
Three Aces

Davis is a deadeye senior shooter who led last year's Gamecocks with 18 points per game and set four school three-point shooting records. Watson is one of the SEC's top playmakers, averaging 4.5 assists to go with 12.2 points as a sophomore. McKie is the backcourt's most dynamic player. He was the SEC Rookie of the Year, averaging 15.4 points while breaking four of Alex English's freshman records.

Solid as the backcourt looks, that's just how iffy the front threesome is. Fogler lost only one player from last year's squad, but he was Malik Russell, the team's

rebounding leader. Five players divvy time up front. Sophomore Bud Johnson was a part-time starter at power forward. A good defender, the 6'10" Columbia native must refine his offensive skills. Junior Ryan Stack and sophomore William Gallman bring experience to the frontcourt, but not much firepower. Nate Wilbourne, George Formanek, and Johnson take turns manning the middle.

Cautionary note: the young Gamecocks, who won just three road games last year, had better learn to play away from their roost. If not, somebody will have them for dinner come March.



McKie gives the Gamecocks major bounce.

oklahoma state

First there was *Young Guns*, the so-so movie. Next there was *Young Riders*, the lame TV series about a bunch of cowboy kids with guns. Now we have "Young Guns," the Oklahoma State Cowboys, whose fate this season depends on how much mileage Eddie Sutton gets from the strongest recruiting class in recent memory.

Oklahoma State returns 71 percent of its scoring and 64.3 percent of its rebounding, so why all the focus on newcomers? Three reasons: Sutton's crew lost its leading scorer and top rebounder, Jerome Lambert, as well as starting point guard Andre Owens; the returnees are

lacking in star power; and the new kids are really good.

The Cowboys' top returnee is Chianti Roberts, a senior who can play point guard one sequence and switch to big forward the next. Junior Jason Skaer (32 three-pointers, 6.0 rpg) gives Sutton a formidable inside/outside presence. Center Maurice Robinson isn't all that tall (6'7"), but he's plenty wide enough (274 pounds) to block traffic in the lane.

Adrian Peterson (11.3 points) fills the shooting guard spot. R.W. McQuarters is tough and steady at point. But McQuarters, a free safety on the football team, won't be available until after the season.

Trigger-Happy

Then there are the Young Guns. Forward Scott Robisch (6'10" Illinois all-stater), older brother Brett Robisch (a 6'11" Illinois transfer who'll be eligible in January), forward Alex Webber (a 6'10" shot-blocker), forward Desmond Mason (a leaper who can score), guard Joe Adkins (Oklahoma high school player of the year), and guard Estell Laster (48.5 percent from downtown) give OSU serious depth.

Last season's team went 17-10 but declined an NIT invitation. We're betting Sutton won't turn down his next postseason bid.



Sutton hopes for a vintage year from Chianti.

37

tulsa



Seals can do it all. Too bad he has to.

Shea Seals has the catchy name. And, after the 20-point scorching he gave Grant Hill, Scottie Pippen & Co. as a member of last summer's USA Men's Under-22 World Championship Qualifying Team, everyone now knows that he's also got the game.

He leads the Golden Hurricane in their Western Athletic Conference debut with a team that's way short on experience. Whether coach Steve Robinson's group can get anywhere close to the Sweet 16 form that Tulsa

enjoyed in 1994 and 1995 depends on the rapid development of several new players and the emergence—finally—of Rafael Maldonado.

Seals Delivers

As a junior, Seals led Tulsa in scoring with 17.1 points a game while notching 5.7 rebounds, 2.2 assists, and 1.8 steals. But Mr. Do Everything needs the ball, and the job of getting it to him belongs to backcourt mate Rod Thompson, a senior who averaged just 2.8 assists last year as a juco transfer. If Tulsa is to be anything special, Thompson needs to record that many dishes

to Seals alone—per half.

Forward Michael Ruffin has an excellent rookie campaign (7.1 points, 7.7 rebounds, and a team-high 46 blocked shots) to build on. Redshirt freshmen Zac Bennett and John Cornwell share the other forward spot. Juco transfer J.R. Cunningham brings a scorer's mentality (20.3 at St. Gregory's JC) and 6'9" of spring to the frontcourt.

But for Tulsa to party late into March, Seals needs help from Maldonado, a senior big man (6'11" big) with puny career averages of 3.7 points and 2.6 rebounds. Otherwise, the Golden Hurricane leave the Dance early. Yo, Rafael—the future is now.

38

virginia



Deane's touch is anything but cavalier.

Of Tom Jefferson would not have approved. Not only did the Cavs tumble to a 12-15 record and a seventh-place ACC finish, but a series of arrests for everything from shoplifting to malicious wounding polluted blue-blooded Virginia's grounds and tainted its highly regarded basketball program. Now it's up to eight returning lettermen, including all four significant starters, to rub out the blot left from last season.

Virginia has a six-deep cadre of perimeter players, headed by a seasoned backcourt pair: top scorer Harold Deane and sweet-shooting Curtis Staples. Together they accounted for nearly 45 per-

cent of the Cavaliers' scoring last season. Swingman Courtney Alexander was a sensation as an All-ACC freshman shooting an amazing 48.7 percent from the field. Off the bench, 6'7" senior Jamal Robinson still appears underdeveloped but he's an able ball-handler and will back up all three perimeter spots. Sophomore transfer Monte Marcaccini and McDonald's All-American Willie Dersch also lend support.

Possible Pushovers

Inside, however, the Cavaliers are thin, young, and soft. The only muscle is big forward Norman Nolan, whose team-

leading 7.0 rebound average spells out the trouble UVA had on the glass last season. The tentative starter in the pivot is 7'4" sophomore project Chase Metheny. If the gangly Metheny gets eaten up by ACC centers—say, turned into a Duncan donut—freshmen Kris Hunter and Colin Ducharme provide support.

Virginia coach Jeff Jones is unaccustomed to losing; last season was the first in which his Cavs won fewer than 18 games. Mark it as an abnormality, not a slide, and expect Virginia to return to its traditional role of plucky ACC overachiever and NCAA Tournament spoiler.

st. john's

What's a guy from runty Manhattan College doing at big-time St. John's? Slumming, maybe?

New coach Fran Fraschilla, who in four years with the Jaspers produced four tournament teams (two NCAA, two NIT), aims to restore a fabled program that's not seen .500 in three straight seasons. Fraschilla's pledged to return St. John's to the essentials of New York City basketball: jock-tight defense, blue-collar hustle, and blacktop strut.

Fraschilla's commitment to defense could be a godsend: the Red Storm gave up 78.6 points a game last season, the most in

school history. He inherits possibly the Big East's best center, Zendon Hamilton, who averaged an impressive double-double as a sophomore (20.8 ppg, 10.3 rpg). One troublesome note—inflammation in Hamilton's left knee that promised to sideline him for much of the pre-season. If the knee doesn't mend, Fraschilla's first season could be a long one.

Now or Never

Once touted as the greatest Gotham ballplayer since Lew Alcindor, Felipe Lopez hasn't been close to that, but he's developing (16.2 ppg, 6.2 rpg) and just

needs to bring his shot along (26 percent on threes). The superquick, 6'6" Lopez plays off 6'5" Tarik Turner, who draws full-time duty at the point. Senior Fred Lyson is the Red Storm's top three-point threat.

St. John's gets a big boost from the return of Charles Minlend (8.5 rpg in '94-95), out last season with a torn hamstring. He moshes at big forward with promising board-hound Tyrone Grant, who scarfed seven rebounds a game as a freshman.

Fraschilla built a giant-slayer at Manhattan with less than he has here. The NCAA Tournament is no lock, but we say St. John's is back—at least part of the way.



Once S's cover boy, Lopez is now St. John's poster child.

washington

Time out for Final Jeopardy! He's the only college basketball player to perform for two different teams in NCAA title games. The question: Who is Washington Huskies coach Bob Bender?

Bender, who played for Indiana (1976) and Duke (1978), has become a lot more than an answer to a trivia question since taking over the Huskies program in 1994. In March, he was voted Pac-10 coach of the year after steering Washington to its first winning mark (16-12) and post-season invitation (albeit, to the NIT) since 1987.

This season got off to a great start late last spring when 6'8"

All-Pac-10 junior forward Mark Sanford (16.5 points, 6.1 rebounds per game) renounced his decision to enter the NBA draft upon learning he'd be no better than a second-round pick.

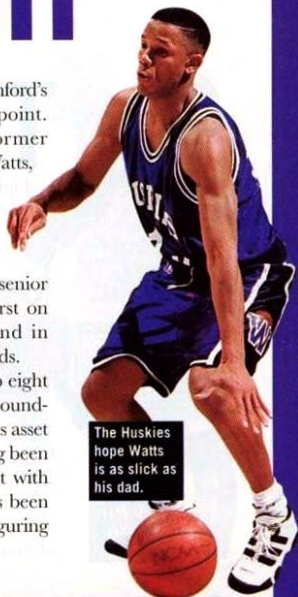
Twin Towers

For what it's worth, at center, 270-pound immovable object Todd MacCulloch has a certain Christian Welpian appeal. Nimble 7'1", 225-pound German sophomore Patrick Fenerling has the dimensions to back up MacCulloch and the mobility to flank him at power forward.

In the backcourt, New Jersey-trained juco transfer Jan Wooten,

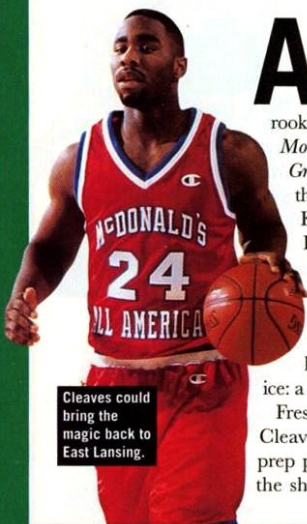
compared by Bender to Stanford's Brevin Knight, starts at point. Donald Watts, son of former Seattle SuperSonic Slick Watts, competes at off-guard with gifted freshman Deon Luten. Swingman in Bender's preferred three-guard lineup is resourceful senior Jamie Booker, who was first on the club in assists, second in steals, and third in rebounds.

UW returns six of its top eight scorers and its three top rebounders. But the bedrock Huskies asset is Bender's record of having been to the NCAA Tournament with every college program he's been associated with. He's not figuring on breaking that string.



The Huskies hope Watts is as slick as his dad.

michigan state



Cleaves could bring the magic back to East Lansing.

After watching Tom Izzo's futile search for a point guard last season, we started mistaking the rookie coach for a character in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*—that's how impossible the quest appeared. Thomas Kelley. Ray Weathers. Jason Klein. Heck, Izzo could have tried John Cleese for all the success he had with those three. This season, though, it looks as if he's found the elusive chalice: a blue chip to run his show.

Freshman sensation Mateen Cleaves, considered the No. 2 prep point guard last year, gets the shot at reminding Spartan

fans of a sweeter time, when the man at the point was pure Magic. Potentially a college superstar, Cleaves allows Weathers and Klein to move back to more comfortable surroundings at the two spot. Weathers, voted the team's most improved player, also is the Spartans' best perimeter threat. At 6'7", Klein's got the size to go with a sweet touch. Kelley, the team's leading assist man (3.6—you see the problem), split time backing up both guard positions.

Down in Front

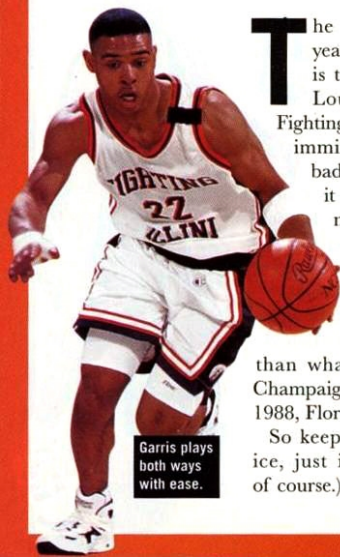
Fix one problem, another pops up. This year it's the frontcourt, where Izzo must replace the 26.4

points and 15.2 rebounds per game lost when Quinton Brooks and Jamie Feick graduated. Senior Jon Garavaglia (5.1 points, 4.5 rebounds) has never lived up to advance billing, but the forward still has an impressive offensive arsenal—maybe he's a late bloomer. Soph Antonio Smith swings between the big forward and center spots. The frontcourt features a host of untested newcomers, including juco transfer Dujuan Wiley and freshmen A.J. Granger and David Thomas.

Cleaves isn't Magic. He isn't even Steve Smith—yet. With him, though, there's enough here to improve on last year's 16-16 NIT season.

COURTESY MCDONALD'S ALL-AMERICAN GAME

illinois



Garris plays both ways with ease.

The good news for first-year coach Lon Kruger is that outgoing coach Lou Henson left the Fighting Illini cupboard brimming with talent. The bad news is that most of it bears a generic label; no gourmet quality here. But Kruger's made his career out of accomplishing exceptional things with a lot less than what he's inherited at Champaign—see Kansas State 1988, Florida 1991.

So keep the champagne on ice, just in case. (Domestic, of course.)

Fighting Chance

The main ingredient is Kiwane Garris. The senior led the team in scoring (15.4 per game) and steals (1.7), and the Big Ten in free-throw percentage (.862), while splitting time at both guard positions. He returns as a viable All-America candidate. The addition of juco transfer Halim Abdullah, a lightning-quick point guard, allows Garris to play at off-guard. Junior Matt Heldman is versatile enough to back up both.

Illinois' first four frontcourt players return for one more go-round. Senior Jerry Hester averaged 11 points a game while connecting on a team-best 39 percent

of his three-point attempts. At 6'6", Hester has the range to play shooting guard and the rebounding ability (4.1) to hold his own at small forward. At 6'5", Bryant Notree led the team in rebounding with 6.5 per game. What he lacks in size, the junior makes up for with tenacity. Jerry Gee and Chris Gandy give Kruger a two-headed center. Last season they combined for 14.6 points and 10.2 boards per. Recruits Victor Chukwudebe and Fess Hawkins will contribute immediately.

We think Kruger can whip up something tasty at Assembly Hall for the NCAA potluck luncheon. Unfortunately for Illinois, they'll leave early with the leftovers.

BRYAN SPORLOCK

oregon

The outlook is downright ducky in Eugene, pun well-intended. Coming off two consecutive winning seasons, Oregon lost just one inconsequential reserve off last year's squad and looks to be taking to this postseason thing like a you-know-what to water.

Kenya Wilkins is the show for Oregon. The energizing 5'10" point guard has started every Ducks game in his first three years, holds the school's steals record, and becomes its all-time assists leader around midseason.

In coach Jerry Green's up-tempo approach, Wilkins teams with two running-and-jumping wingers: Jamal Lawrence, who

tied Wilkins for the team lead in scoring (13.7 per), nailing 37.5 percent of his treys, and Jamar Curry, a riveting open-court player who's Oregon's best defender.

Two former UC-Santa Barbara transfers, Kyle Milling (6'9", 235) and Rob Ramaker (6'10", 232), share the post. Milling, the Ducks' top rebounder (7.6), is mechanical, back-to-the-basket; Ramaker has broader skills—second in steals, third in assists—including a soft shooting touch.

Rainmaker

Bench strength begins with guard Terik Brown, the son of former NBA gunner Fred "Downtown"

Brown. Named to the All-Pac-10 freshman team, Terik showed flashes of Dad's range last season by nailing 61 three-point shots. His nickname? Of course: "Uptown."

Seven-foot junior Mike Carson subs at center, but could start if Ramaker is revisited by chronic knee trouble. The return of junior Henry Madden, a two-year starter before shredding an ACL, establishes terrific forward depth.

Athletic, deep, and experienced, the Ducks just may have their most gifted team ever. That won't bring them any closer to UCLA or Arizona, but it will bring them within reach of their second NCAA berth in three seasons.



maryland

The Terrapins washed up far short of their preseason buildup last year, eking out a .500 record in the ACC and folding quietly against Santa Clara in the first round of the NAAs—after we pegged 'em eighth in the nation! What was counted as a strength (having four accomplished seniors) turned out to be a minus (four mutually-exclusive individual agendas).

No way that happens this season: this is incontrovertibly Keith Booth's team. A zealous inside player, the 6'6", 210-pound senior averaged 15.3 points and 7.8 rebounds. He moves to small forward this fall, as 6'9" Rodney Elliott, who played big in big

games last season when green-lighted off the bench, takes over at power forward. Brian Watkins, a strong 6'9", 215-pound Notre Dame transfer with range, is the first forward off the bench.

Point guard Terrell Stokes and swingman Laron Profit, who saw substantial minutes as freshmen, make a promising starting pair—Stokes as a pure passer; Profit as a jazzy 6'6" scorer. Lithuanian Sarunas Jasikevicius provides needed three-point pop off the bench.

Sweet Dream

The post will be played, or at least occupied, by Obinna Ekezie, a 6'9" former soccer

player out of Nigeria who's still learning the finer points of basketball. (Hmm, a Nigerian big man with soccer-schooled feet who needs to develop his hoops skills....well, coach Gary Williams can dream, can't he?) Seven-foot freshman Mike Mardesich backs up Ekezie.

Maybe this year's group of Terrapins will respond better to diminished expectations. Certainly Williams has crafted winners out of far less than this. We think they're a bubble team. NCAA or NIT? It'll come down to the performances of Stokes and Profit.





Hutchins scores higher than any other Eagle.

marquette

Their Canadian-born center looks like he'd prefer hip-checking players into the scorer's table instead of blocking shots. Their favorite defensive play is an unnecessarily brutal hack.

Their starting frontline totals 675 pounds. Five players are 6'7" or taller and weigh at least 220 pounds. But there's more to the Golden Eagles than brawn. Coach Mike Deane returns eight players, including three starters, from a 23-8 squad that advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament. This team can play. Too bad Marquette doesn't have a football team as well.

Marquette's top guy down low this season is 6'11" center Richard Shaw, who can run and jump, not that his scoring (2.9 per game) and rebounding (2.3) show it. Deane hopes that playing on the Canadian national senior team last summer prepped him for a step-up in class.

Adding muscular support down low is power forward Faisal Abraham, who provides consistency at both ends of the court. At 6'9", 225 pounds, small forward Chris Crawford causes lots of match-up problems. Redshirt freshman John Polonowski (6'8") and sophomore Mike Bergen (6'7") give Deane plenty of options.

The Big Bird

The most indispensable Eagle is point guard Aaron Hutchins. The top returning scorer (14.0) on the team and Conference USA's leading assist man (6.9), he's also Marquette's only legitimate ball-handler and penetrator. Hutchins' backcourt mate is senior Anthony Pieper, who averaged 11.6 points as a junior. Freshmen Alton Mason, a point guard, and Bart Miller, a two, provide help off the bench.

A lot depends on the durability of Hutchins and the progress of Shaw, but look for the Golden Eagles to shove their way into the Big Dance.

texas tech



Super sub Carr has cracked the starting lineup.

Last season, with the Red Raiders cracking the Top 20 in football and the Sweet 16 in basketball, Lubbock savored its first national rankings since homeboy Buddy Holly ruled the Top 40.

It's so easy to fall in love with players who don't fade away—and finish 30-2. But what if four of your starting five graduate at the same time you move into the much tougher Big 12?

Backboard-shattering Darwin Ham is gone, as is All-American forward Jason Sasser. The only remaining starter from the unit that upset North Carolina in the second round is 6'11" center Tony Battie, a commanding

rebounder and shot-blocker with an ordinary 9.7 points per game.

4-gone Conclusion

Frontcourt help comes from senior power forward Gionet Cooper, who shot 53.6 percent as a reserve last year, defensive specialist Da'Mon Roberts, and junior small forward Gracen Averil, a prolific foward scorer. If the NCAA had a Sixth Man Award, shooting guard Cory Carr would have won it. He averaged 16.1 points a game, hit a school-record 92 threes, and was named second-team All-SWC. No wonder he's a starter this season.

Sophomore Stanley Bonewitz

and junior transfer Archie Myers duel at the point. Bonewitz can create and dish, while Myers prefers to take it to the hole. Freshman Rayford Young, a skillful, though raw, six-foot jackrabbit, vies for minutes too. Brock Barnes and the aptly named Deuce Jones are solid twos off the bench.

Credit James Dickey for fashioning a fine team out of a program that was 13-45 the two years before his arrival in 1991. Facing much stiffer competition this season, he won't equal last year's run, but Texas Tech fans with long memories will be happy with 20 wins and a low NCAA Tournament seed.

unlv

You remember UNLV, don't you? Perennial powerhouse. Fertile NBA greenhouse. Tark the Shark making Miami football look like a church outing. Then scandal. Tark leaves under cloud. The program dries up and blows away, like a tumbling tumbleweed.

Well, UNLV's back. On the strength of the country's best (or close to it) batch of recruits and a medically redshirted player returning to health, former John Calipari-underling Bill Bayno has the Runnin' Rebels on the rise. And get this—there's enough raw talent here that no job is locked up.

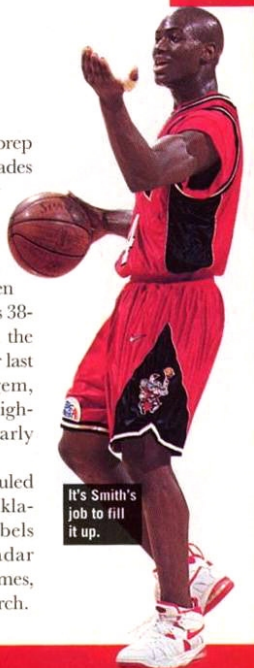
Long Rangers

Guard Damian Smith, who shot 43.2 percent from three-point range in '94-95 but sat out most of last season after knee surgery, is the Rebels' best shooter. His competition at off-guard comes from Jermaine "Sunshine" Smith, out of Brooklyn, who can also open up a game from outside (41.3 percent). The point goes to one of two aspirants, Kevin James and Chancellor Davis.

Up front, Eric Lee, a shot-blocker on the mend from back surgery, and Keon Clark, a 6'11" juco transfer, supply center skill and depth. Bayno also landed Isaiah Epps, a 6'10" freshman out

of Maine who was a top-five prep center and, if he gets his grades up, could be a factor by January. Tony Lane, forced to play center last year because of Lee's injury, goes back to power forward. Warren Rosegreen is only 6'5", but his 38-inch vertical leap made him the Big West's leading rebounder last year. Another recruiting gem, transfer Tyrone Nesby, a high-powered scorer, is the early favorite at small forward.

Bayno purposefully scheduled games at Syracuse and Oklahoma State to get the Rebels back on college hoops radar screens. If you miss those games, watch for the blip come March.



It's Smith's job to fill it up.

memphis

Can a team lose a lottery pick, 62 percent of its scoring, and 58 percent of its rebounding—and stay competitive? The short, if improbable, answer is yes.

Do-everything center Lorenzen Wright left Memphis after two years for the NBA (sort of, he's with the L.A. Clippers). But Larry Finch's Tigers remain a tough midlevel team capable of knocking off an unsuspecting elite team at tournament time.

Two good reasons for opposing coaches to be nervous: four-year starters Cedric Henderson and Chris "Shorty" Garner.

One of the top small forwards in the country, Henderson fig-

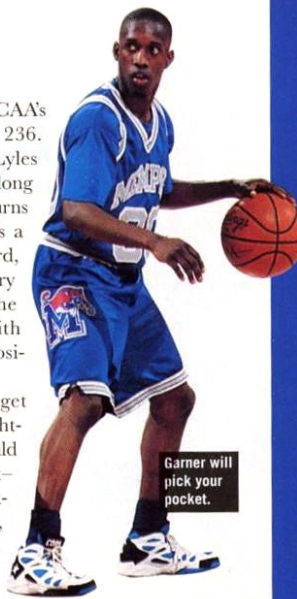
ures to boost significantly the 12.6 points he averaged as a junior. Lining up opposite him should have been Chad Allen, but a late-season knee injury will sideline the senior until at least January. Enter shot-blocking juco transfer Torian Richards, who sat out last season. Wright's departure leaves a huge hole in the middle that 6'9" transfer Michael Brittian attempts to fill. He was one of the top available juco centers, but no one yet claims he has the Wright stuff.

Get Shorty

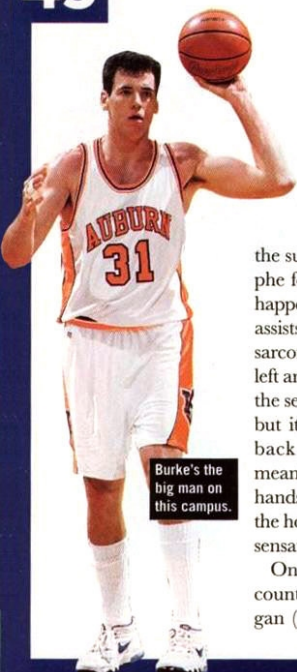
Garner may be the quickest end-to-end player in the nation. The

5'10" point guard is the NCAA's active steals leader with 236. Juco transfers Demond Lyles and Keldrick Braddford, along with Larry Finch Jr., take turns spelling Garner. Depth's a problem at shooting guard, where juco newcomer Harry Allen and John Gales, the lone returning player with serious minutes at the position, share time.

So long as they don't get bogged down in what-might-have-been, the Tigers should claw their way into post-season play—where, lurking among the tall grass, they'll be far more dangerous than they look.



Garner will pick your pocket.



Burke's the big man on this campus.

auburn

Losing your point guard—one of the best in the SEC—to major surgery over the summer would spell catastrophe for most teams. That's what happened to Auburn, where SEC assists leader Wes Flanigan had a sarcoma removed from his upper left arm. Coach Cliff Ellis expects the senior to make a full recovery, but it'll take him a while to get back into game shape. In the meantime, the Tigers are in good hands, because there's a Doc in the house—freshman point guard sensation Julius "Doc" Robinson.

One of the top recruits in the country, Robinson allows Flanigan (13.4 points, 6.7 assists per

game) to work himself back into shape gradually, then shift over to the two spot. The third backcourt man, sophomore Derek Caldwell (6.2 points as a freshman), gives the Tigers a kinetic three-guard rotation.

Pat's Hands

Down low, senior center Pat Burke has NBA first-rounder virtually tattooed on his 6'11" frame. Burke averaged 11.0 points and 8.7 rebounds as a junior as he and Flanigan led the Tigers to 19 wins, an eight-year high. Senior Alvin Jefferson spells Burke in the middle. The Tigers' most intriguing newcomer, seven-foot Mamadou

N'diaye, a 21-year-old freshman from Senegal, also gets a look.

Bryant Smith (3.6 ppg, 2.0 rpg last season in limited duty) takes over at small forward, but look for freshman Daymeon Fishback to get serious minutes. The 6'5" Mr. Basketball in Kentucky has good springs and a silky touch. What power forward Franklin Williams (6'6") lacks in size, he makes up for in grit. He worked hard for his 10.4 points and 4.8 rebounds a game last year.

Although altitudinally challenged, with just two players among their top eight over 6'7", the Tigers have enough backcourt strength and senior leadership to go hunting in March.

alabama

How many consecutive years can a team lose an NBA first-round draft pick before it has to rebuild? The Crimson Tide is on two years and counting. Last year, coach David Hobbs' bunch had to learn how to play without Antonio McDyess. This season, it's Roy Rogers. Guess what? We think rebuilding can wait another year or so.

One reason 'Bama will improve on 1996's NIT semifinals season is because the Tide is higher, er, bigger and taller. Last year, Rogers and Thalamus McGhee were the only start-

ers taller than 6'5". This year the starting frontline averages 6'7". Another reason we're high on the Tide is because it's deeper. Hobbs will give at least three newcomers major minutes this season.

Rogers' replacement as go-to guy (and probable first-round pick) is Eric Washington, the SEC's leading returning scorer at 18.6 points per game. Washington is also a money player—he raised his average to 26 points in five NIT games.

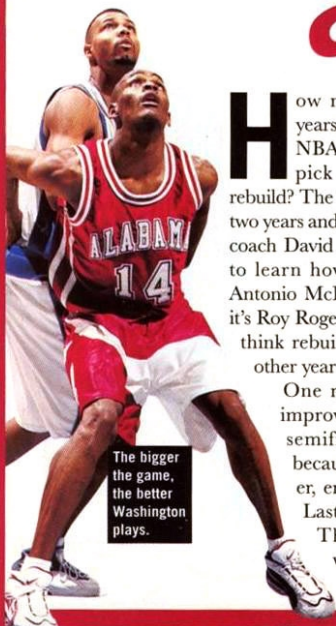
The 6'4" Washington won't have to worry about carrying the rebounding load. He teams up in the frontcourt with McGhee (6'9") and sophomore M.C.

Mazique (6'10"). Additional help comes from three signees: Demetrius Alexander, Ricky Poole, and Jeremy Hayes.

Growing Up

The backcourt is decidedly green: sophomore point guard Brian Williams is the only returning player from last year's three-guard rotation. Juco transfer George Brown spells him. Soph Anton Reese and junior Damon Bacote split time at the two spot.

The Tide has the strength and the size to get back to the NCAAs. But if the backcourt doesn't mature rapidly, it could be a short visit.



The bigger the game, the better Washington plays.

missouri

Clock winding down, tight game, you give a foul to get the ball. Bad move, especially if you hack Missouri's Derek Grimm or Jason Sutherland, the Big Eight's top two free-throw shooters (88.5 and 87.7 percent, respectively).

Small potatoes, free-throw shooting? Maybe in the great scheme, but it's one of those little things—this whole team's good from the line—that the Tigers need to get into postseason play.

The big thing is getting a healthy senior season from 6'8" forward Kelly Thames, who was Big Eight freshman of the year in 1993-94, when the Tigers came within a game of the Final

Four. Out with a knee injury in '94-95, he returned to average 12.7 points but tired toward the end of last season.

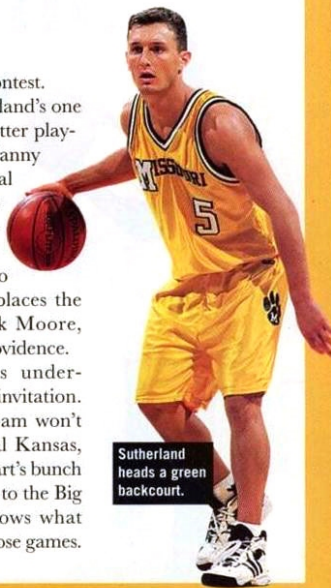
Boardless Game

He can't falter again. Besides Grimm, last year's most consistent performer, the rest of the frontcourt has everybody in Missouri saying "Show Me." Raw sophs Monte Hardge and L. Dee Murdock and rookie 6'11" center Tate Decker better show some muscle, because last year's twin towers, Sammie and Simeon Haley (or is it vice versa?) are gone, and Mizzou's top returning board crasher, Thames,

snagged just 5.3 per contest.

At off-guard, Sutherland's one of the conference's better players and sophomore Danny Allouche is a potential star. But neither is yet the equal of graduated Julian Winfield. At point, untested juco transfer Dibi Ray replaces the disaffected Kendrick Moore, who transferred to Providence.

Last year's Tigers underachieved to an NIT invitation. This year's weaker team won't beat out division rival Kansas, but coach Norm Stewart's bunch could get invited back to the Big Dance. And who knows what could happen in the close games.



Sutherland heads a green backcourt.

minnesota

You could search all of Minnesota's 10,000 lakes and not find one that's as deep as the Golden Gophers, who return all five starters and 10 of their top 11 scorers. That gives coach Clem Haskins at least two players with Big Ten experience at each position. So why don't we have the Gophers ranked higher?

Because this is basically the same team that struggled to a 19-13 record, finished 10-8 in the conference, then lost its second game in the NIT. Sure, experience counts, but so does quality.

The Gophers' top gun is 6'1" Bobby Jackson. The senior led the team in scoring (13.3 per

game), plays both guard positions, and can hit from the perimeter or drive to the hole. But all that adds up to a solid player, not a star.

The same goes for backcourt mate Eric Harris, who had an assist to turnover ratio of 2 to 1. Harris attempted fewer than four shots per game, which is good, because he has plenty of players to distribute to.

Star Rising

Besides Jackson, the Gophers look to small forward Sam Jacobson for points. The 6'6" junior has the tools to be a blue-chipper, but last year's 12.8 points, 4.8 rebounds,

and 2.0 assists had better be just a first installment on his promise, not a final payment.

Not many teams will punch the ball inside, where 260-pounders John Thomas and Courtney James figure the paint belongs to them. Adding to the team's depth are returnees Trevor Winter, Mark Jones, Quincy Lewis, Charles Thomas—and freshman Kevin Loge, who figures to face a lot of hazing from all those upperclassmen.

The Gophers have manpower, so they won't wear down, even in the rugged Big Ten. But they're a little shy of stardom to make much postseason noise.



Jackson calls the shots—and makes them, too.

mississippi state



Washington won't have to politic for floor time this year.

You take over the head coaching position at your alma mater and in a decade steadily transform a nothing team into a national championship contender. Then—bam!—you lose seven lettermen (including your starting five), 89 percent of your scoring, and 78 percent of your rebounding. It's enough to make a man get out of coaching and go into a less frustrating profession, like hurricane prevention.

Yet, a year after guiding the Bulldogs to the penultimate game of the NAAs, coach Richard Williams is back, fully aware that without first-rounders Erick Dam-

pier and Dontae Jones, as well as ineligible point guard Marcus Bullard, his chances of returning to the Final Four are south of zero.

But don't go feeling too sorry for Williams. Things could be worse. Things *have* been worse.

All Aboard

Helping ease those losses is one of the nation's richest incoming classes, headlined by Horatio "Big Train" Webster. The two-time juco All-American plays both forward positions and gives the Bulldogs a physical presence plus big-time offense. The other forward slot goes to Quentin Smith (19.1 points, 12.3 boards

per game), ranked among the nation's top 30 high schoolers. The galactic responsibility of replacing Dampier falls on Tyrone Washington, whose one-year apprenticeship will have to do.

A bigger problem will be replacing Bullard, a three-point marksman who led the team in assists and steals. Auditioning are juco transfer Trey Moore and soph Bart Hyche. The two-guard job goes to one of two 6'4" freshmen, T.J. Billups or Derrick Jones. Returnee Whit Hughes provides three and two depth.

So the Bulldogs will catch most of the Big Dance on TV. At least this time Williams' rebuilding job won't take as long.

uab



The streaky Dixon needs to hone his chops.

Okay, the search committee didn't have to look too hard for coach Gene Bartow's successor. Bartow, who also happens to be athletic director, simply looked across the dinner table.

Gene's son and assistant coach, Murry, will honcho the Blazers. His assignment: be the man his father was in the 1980s, when he led the Blazers to seven straight NCAA Tournaments.

Birmingham's boosters hope a little nepotism goes a long way.

The success of Bartow's inaugural season rests on the reedy shoulders of 6'7" swingman

Carlos Williams. The 200-pound junior led Conference USA in scoring average at 20.2 points and the team in rebounding at 8.4. Filling out the frontcourt are James Bristow and Norman Williams, two seniors counted on to do much of the dirty work underneath, freeing Carlos to focus on filling the basket.

Bristow, a 6'8" leaper, has a lust for loose balls and a penchant for timely rebounds. At 6'7", 240, Norman is more than just the team's second-best Williams—he's also the Blazers' enforcer. But both players need to improve their overall job under the boards (a combined 9.5 rebounds per game).

Unstable Backcourt

Junior point guard Cedric Dixon leads a somewhat unsettled backcourt. Dixon, who averaged 11.2 points and 3.1 assists, needs to be more consistent. Shooting guard figures to be a revolving door with senior Chad Jones, sophomore Damon Cobb, and freshman Torrey Ward the revolvers.

UAB shot a miserable 40.9 percent from the field last year. That must improve—a lot—if the Blazers have hopes of playing into March. There's some talent and experience here, but basketball isn't soccer: at the end of the day, you have to be able to light up the scoreboard once in a while.

rhode island

55

The guy ABC parades around on Sunday nights with an S on his chest?

He's a fraud. The real man of steel wears No. 21 and plays point guard for the Rams.

Diminutive (5'10") Tyson Wheeler led Rhode Island in scoring (16.5 points per game), assists (6.0), and three-pointers (7.9 for the year). But the junior isn't coach Al Skinner's only weapon. The Rams return all five starters from a team that reached the quarterfinals of the NIT (they lost to runner-up St. Joseph's).

The two spot poses a stickler that's a coach's dream. Skinner can start junior Cuttino Mobley, who led the team in scoring in

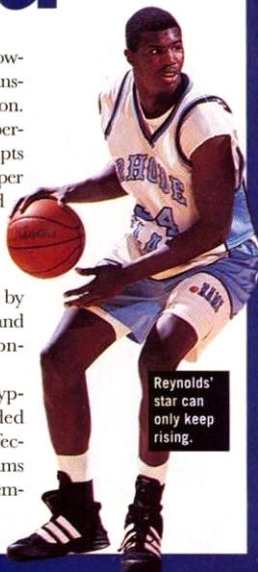
1994-95 and redshirted last year after suffering an elbow injury. Or, he can give the nod to Mobley's replacement, senior Chad Thomas, who averaged 11.5 points and 2.5 assists and led the team in steals with 54.

Reynolds Rap

Up front, Rhode Island looks to be Ram tough with power forward Antonio Reynolds and center Michael Anderson. Reynolds was the Atlantic 10's rookie of the year, averaging 12.1 points and a team-leading 8.7 boards. Anderson started every game as a junior, averaging 8.9 points and 6.0 rebounds while blocking 57 shots.

Joshua King was effective following a one-year layoff after transferring from Cal State-Fullerton. The junior connected on 35 percent of his three-point attempts and pulled down 4.6 rebounds per game. Sophomore forward David Arigbabu must build on his solid freshman season (5.3 ppg, 3.7 rpg). The Rams have a quality bench headed by sophomore Preston Murphy and senior defensive specialist Ibn-Hashim Bakari.

Barring a bad dose of kryptonite poisoning, and provided Skinner can juggle minutes effectively in the backcourt, the Rams could make a nuisance of themselves at the Big Dance.



Reynolds' star can only keep rising.

florida state

56

At Florida State, where basketball used to be the halftime show separating football from spring football, coach Pat Kennedy thought he'd brought the game of Naim Smith to permanent...well, if not prominence, at least respectability. But the Seminoles haven't reached the postseason since 1993 (the year Sam Cassell left) and have had three successive sub-.500 records. Time to punt?

Not just yet. Kennedy hopes that five returning starters and a terrific recruiting season help the program resurface—again.

The Seminoles' hopes swing on their stylish new point guard, Kerry Thompson, considered

one of the top five juco players in the country last year. Thompson has a trio of shooting guards to look to, the most accomplished being senior James Collins, fifth in the ACC in scoring (18.3 ppg). The other wing's shared by Lamar Greer, out of his element as the starting point guard the last two years, and Geoff Brower, the team's best outside shooter. Top-50 freshman Devonaire Deas can play both guard positions.

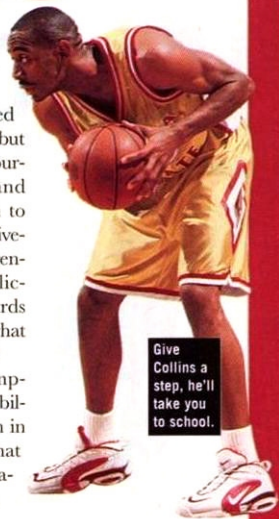
Big Hopes

The Seminoles have big men, as opposed to true pivot players. Nominal center Kirk Luchman is a stiff, mechanical widebody

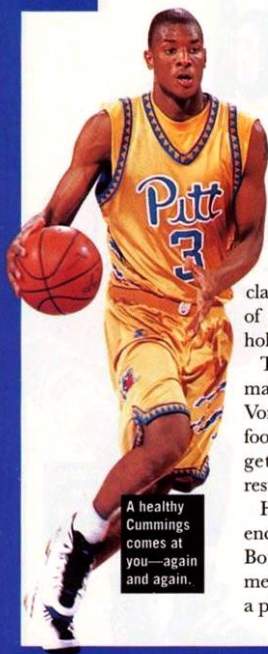
(6'10", 240) who lacks the athleticism of starters Corey Louis and Randell Jackson.

Discipline problems downed the 6'9" Louis' second season, but he blocked 74 shots in an encouraging freshman year and Kennedy's counting on him to rebound—literally and figuratively. Jackson is one of the new generation of high-bounding, licorice-thin 6'11" small forwards masquerading as centers. So what if he doesn't have a sky hook?

Best-case scenario: Thompson's a hit, Louis plays to his abilities, and the 'Noles land fifth in the ACC. In a conference that often sends six to the Tournament, that would be just fine.



Give Collins a step, he'll take you to school.



A healthy Cummings comes at you—again and again.

pittsburgh

This time last season, hopes were running high in Pantherland. Coming off a 10-18 finish in '94-95, coach Ralph Willard had a top recruiting class tabbed to execute the kind of turnaround U.S. Steel shareholders can only dream of.

Then, injuries stunted freshman guards Kellii Taylor and Vontee Cummings, and seven-foot center Mark Blount couldn't get out of his own way. The result: a virtual rerun at 10-17.

Hope triumphs over experience again. With better reason. Both Taylor and Cummings are mended. They could make quite a potent backcourt.

Willard won't commit to a lineup just yet, preferring to shuffle 10 men. Ego problems? A .370 team hasn't earned the right to get puffed up about playing time.

In the Pink

The coach does favor seniors. He has three: center Gerald Jordan, forward Chad Varga, and two guard Jason Maile. Jordan, on experience alone, edges out Blount, whose hacking habit limited him to 14.4 minutes a game. Varga, the team's top returning scorer (12.5 per game), also led the Panthers with 6.3 rebounds per. He's the lone banger on a unit that otherwise

got wiped off the glass. Maile, a 40 percent three-point shooter, has been bedeviled by back and leg woes but looks ready.

Junior Kevin Willard, the coach's son, offers scrappy support at point guard. Small forward Andre Howard was the most unheralded but most consistent of last year's newcomers. Recruits Isaac Hawkins, a 6'8" power forward, and Jarrett Lockhart, a 6'2" shooting guard, provide the insurance this injury rehabbing team might need.

The Panthers won't be stuck on 10 wins again. A healthy core gives them a bump—enough of one, if Blount emerges, to push Pitt into March.



Muller gets his points, and his opponents don't.

illinois state

Once upon a time, a team short on raw talent depended on senior savvy to get anywhere. But who has seniors anymore? There's not one to be found among this year's Redbirds, who aren't exactly long in the raw talent department, either. Well, no seniors doesn't mean no experience: fourth-year coach Kevin Stallings has four starters back from last year's NIT quarterfinalist. And the talent part? Hey, you can go far—maybe even to the NCAAs—on hustle and muscle.

Stallings' major task is to replace Maurice Trotter, the departed shooting guard who led the team in scoring the past two

seasons. Top candidate is East Carolina emigré Skipp Schaeffbauer, who averaged 11 points his sophomore year before transferring. Soph Kyle Cartmill also auditions at the two. The Redbirds' floor general is junior Jamar Smiley, who led the Missouri Valley Conference with 6.7 assists per game last season. British-born Steve Hansell, a dead-eye shooter, gives them depth at the point.

Little Big Men

The frontline is short—averaging 6'7" on tiptoes—but athletic. Small forward Dan Muller, who's started every game since he

entered the gym two years ago, averaged 11.1 points per game, led the team with 5.7 rebounds, and was the conference's defensive player of the year.

Forward Rico Hill is the team's best athlete. As a frosh, the 6'6", 215-pounder started 22 games. LeRoy Watkins is smallish (6'7") for a center, but he's an outstanding post defender who knows how to use his wide, 255-pound frame. Sophomore Kenneth Pierson, sophomore Ben Holmstrom, and 23-year-old recruit Ronald vanVelzen add depth.

If this team grows up quickly, Illinois State could make the jump to the Big Dance.

arkansas-little rock

Ever wonder what became of Wimp Sanderson, the fashion-impaired mastermind who would annually coach Alabama deep into the NCAA Tournament?

He packed all those dreadful plaid jackets and moved on to luckless Arkansas-Little Rock. In his first two seasons his Trojans have been barred from March Merriness by a sum of four points. Sanderson & Co. have lost the last two Sun Belt championship games, both in their gym. Last year, a cruel buzzer-beater to New Orleans (57-56) sent them back to their dorms. The season before, it was a nail-biter to Western Kentucky (82-79).

Price Is Right

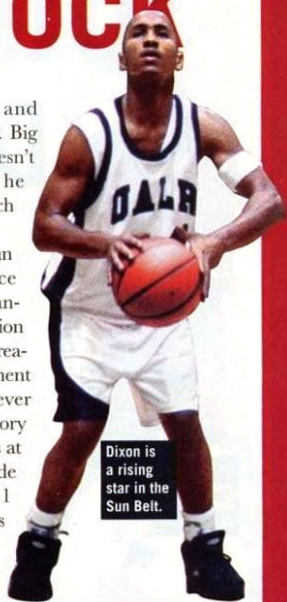
The big loss to overcome this year is of Derek Fisher, a first-round draft pick of the Lakers. Stepping into Fisher's point guard shoes is James Price, a 24-year-old juco transfer. Price spent four years in the Army and is a Gulf war vet, so he's had tougher assignments than this.

Price's first option is senior guard Malik Dixon, the Sun Belt's returning leading scorer (17.8 a game). On the wing is senior Rod Smith, a defensive hound who always draws the other guys' best scorer.

Strapping 6'6", 240-pound senior center Muntrelle Dobbins

scrounges points (12.6) and rebounds (8.4) down under. Big forward Charles Koonce doesn't have Dobbins' mass, but he has a lighter offensive touch and more mobility.

Traditionally, only one Sun Belt team—the conference tournament winner—gets appointed by the NCAA selection committee, which is the only reason that this year's tournament host, UALR again, has never made the trip. Fly that history against Sanderson's 12 years at Alabama, in which the Tide made the big guest list 11 times. We say Price shows Division I skills and Sanderson makes it 1 for 3.



Dixon is a rising star in the Sun Belt.

va. commonwealth

Coach Sonny Smith and Virginia Commonwealth know how to make a first impression. The Rams went 14-2 in the Colonial Athletic Association in their inaugural season, captured the conference title, and then gave Mississippi State a scare in the NCAA first round.

The key? CAA Coach of the Year Smith and the Rams really liked each other. And the love-fest goes on this season. VCU returns three starters, including point guard Sherman Hamilton. The Gary Payton look-alike can score (11 per game) and pick your pocket just like the Glove. Joining him in the backcourt is senior Patrick Lee, another

great defender who needs to improve his shooting.

A Byrd in Hand...

Solid George Byrd is back at center. Despite his size, the 6'8" Byrd blocked 61 shots and helped VCU dominate on the boards. Smith, the man who introduced The Round Mound of Rebound to the world, snagged top-50 JC swingman Melvin Drake and fellow juco Torrance Archie for board work—figure 15 caroms a game between them.

Soph Scott Marston and freshman Simon Moore back up Drake and Archie, respectively.

Jucos Mylo Brooks, Roderick Griggs, and Kevin Miles will all see time. In the backcourt, Marcus Reed fills in for Hamilton.

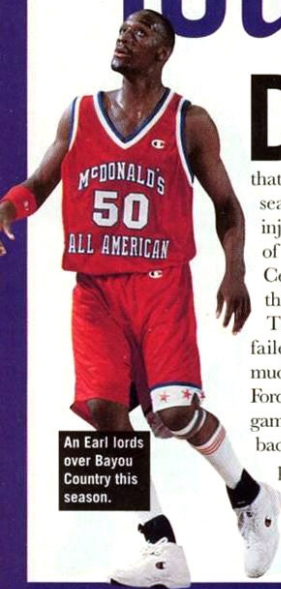
When Ohio State transfer Robert Shelton returns in December, the Rams should get the outside shooting they desperately need. Seven of the Rams' nine losses came in nonconference games—and VCU faces Miami (Ohio), Pittsburgh, and Alabama early on. Once the CAA cranks up, the Rams should roll. If they can hold off a Joe Bunnless Old Dominion, they'll make their second straight trip to the party.



Hamilton's the point man.

61

louisiana state



An Earl lords over Bayou Country this season.

Did Dale Brown walk under a ladder? Fall under a voodoo hex? Whatever it was, the three-year jinx that produced nothing but losing seasons at LSU, caused major injuries, and sucked the fun out of the Pete Maravich Assembly Center finally seemed to be over this season.

Then top-50 prep Cory Powell failed to qualify. And worse—much worse—point guard Deuce Ford (11.5 points, 5.4 rebounds per game), who was expected to come back from a torn ACL, was suspended by Brown for the season for violating team rules.

Guess somebody forgot to break out the gris-gris.

Happy Anniversary

The news isn't all bad. Brown begins his 25th season as coach with another solid recruiting class, highlighted by prep All-American Lester Earl. The 6'10" Bayou native shouldn't have a problem acclimating to the Assembly Center: he won three consecutive high school state championships there. Juco transfer Bob Hall (6'10", 260) gives the Tigers a formidable inside presence, while hot-shooting freshman Terrance Simmons comes off the bench at the two spot.

Soph defensive specialist Gene Nabors takes Ford's place at the point. Forward Duane Spencer

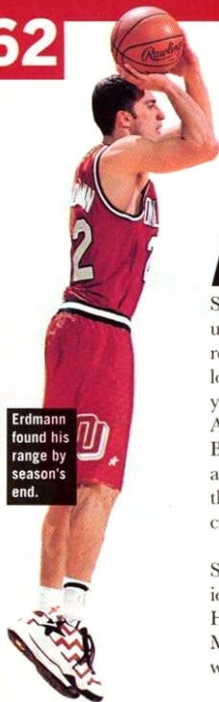
enters his senior season needing to add consistency to his repertoire. Soph Maurice Carter has the uphill task of replacing last year's scoring leader, Ronnie Henderson, at shooting guard.

Second-year center Nick Sheppard was once heralded for his Shaq-like qualities; Brown now would settle for good backup minutes. Soph forward Rogers Washington disappointed early but finished strong.

The Tigers get thrown to the lions early at the Maui Classic. Maybe they'll emerge relatively unscathed. Maybe they'll have a decent showing in the tough SEC. Still, you have to wonder which of the bayou spirits Brown offended.

62

oklahoma



Erdmann found his range by season's end.

Around Norman, the word *rebuilding* carries as much appeal as the word *downsizing*. So the Sooners won't admit that they're, uh, starting over. Too bad their roster says otherwise. Oklahoma lost three critical starters off last year's squad—including All-American Ryan Minor and All-Big Eight Ernie Abercrombie—and, with them, 57 percent of the team's scoring and 51 percent of its rebounding.

To fill the void, coach Kelvin Sampson has plenty of new bodies. Quality? Let's wait and see. He needs a big year out of Lou Moore—that is, after the 6'7" forward sits out the first six games

of the season as penance for his transfer from Indiana. As a juco freshman, Moore averaged 25 points and nine rebounds and was Alabama JC player of the year. He's already been made a co-captain. While he awaits eligibility, 6'8" freshman forward, Eduardo Najera, a sweet shooter from Mexico, will see action. Evan Wiley and Bobby Joe Evans, both limited, platoon at the center spot.

Guarded Optimism

Freshman Tim Heskett, South Carolina's 4A player of the year, gets first crack at the point. If he sticks, Sampson can play juco

transfer Corey Brewer (26.3 point per game) and Nate Erdmann in a three-guard set. If not, Brewer slides to point and Erdmann, who averaged 18.1 points in the final nine conference games, becomes the go-to guy.

Quality backcourt reserves are three-point ace Robert Allison, who returns after missing most of last season because of back problems, and Michael Cotton, who proved too good to redshirt when Allison went down.

A lenient schedule could bear a 20-win season, but with as many as five new faces in key roles, the Sooners will have over-achieved if they make it to round two of the NCAAs.

brigham young

63

Before you can fairly assess any season at Brigham Young, you must first deduct the loss of players to missionary work—and this year the cut is deep.

Two capable backcourt players, Todd Christensen and Nathan Cooper, are serving their church in Chile and Portugal, respectively. The coach's son, would-be starting point Robbie Reid, is in Greece. A fourth Cougar, center Bret Jepsen, presumably drew the short straw and is in Nashville.

The only known quantity is 6'6" senior swingman Bryon Ruffner. What do we know? Only that the transfer from Utah

Valley State College was voted to the WAC All-Newcomer team after averaging 18.8 points and 6.0 rebounds. Outside of Keith Van Horn, Ruffner is as gifted as any player in the WAC.

New Faces

Everybody else is wait-and-see. Forward Justin Weidauer, BYU's leading rebounder, is a tenacious grappler at 6'7", but what he does with the ball after he gets it still needs some work. With Jepsen not available, Jeff Campbell, a transplanted forward, plies the pivot. The sleeper is 6'7" swingman Michael Tompson, out of New Zealand, who

was coveted by both Utah and New Mexico.

Point guard is especially wobbly: unheralded freshman Matt Montague and walk-on Scott Sonnenberg compete for Reid's old job. Grant Berges started twice at off-guard last year, which gives him a slight edge over freshmen Robbie Yates and Michael Vranes.

Last season marked the first time in Roger Reid's seven years that the Cougars failed to make either the NCAAAs (five times) or the NIT (once). This club, with seven new faces and almost as many question marks, is far from his best, so a sixth NCAA berth would be a real achievement.



Ruffner's the only sure thing at BYU.

xavier

64

Somebody has to be No. 64. Now that the Musketeers have shown they can swim among the piranhas of the Atlantic 10, we're saying that somebody is Xavier.

Okay, so maybe finishing 8-8 in their first tour of their new conference (13-15 overall) was only treading water. They're still No. 64. That's our story, and we're sticking to it.

Fort Bragg

Last season, the Musketeers' frontline looked more like Mouseketeers: only one player, Kevin Carr, topped 6'7"—barely. Carr plays at a docile 6'8".

Some burly newcomers beef up Xavier's inside game. The most touted is 6'8" power forward Torraye Bragg, a premier juco star a year ago who third-year head coach Skip Prosser hopes is the physical scorer/rebounder the Musketeers need.

Junior T.J. Johnson (6.8 rpg) is not center-tall at 6'7", but he mans the post while 6'9" freshmen centers Nate Turner and Reggie Butler develop and Carr rehabs from a knee injury.

A perimeter charge comes from 6'7" soph James Posey, a small forward with a side of guard skills who was a Prop 48 absentee last year.

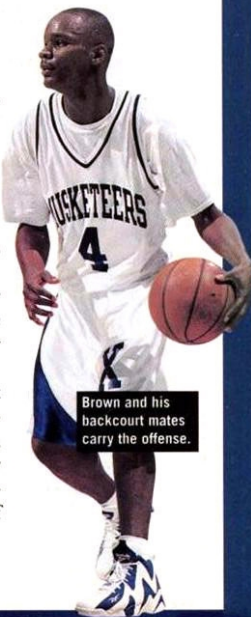
The backcourt features three

of the conference's top four freshman scorers: Lenny Brown (team-high 12.5 ppg), Gary Lumpkin, and swingman Darnell Williams, who shot 51 percent last year. His 40 percent from three-point range suggests takeover offensive skill and nerve.

Check Xavier in January: Carr returns, and we'll know more about the novices up front. They hold the key to any turnaround.

The Musketeers notched eight NCAA bids during their nine-year stint in the Midwestern Collegiate Conference. They may well have done the recruiting work to earn their first out of the Atlantic 10.

Hey, it beats No. 65.



Brown and his backcourt mates carry the offense.

who's next?

The top 50 high school seniors. By Brick Oettinger

POWER
FORWARD

SMALL
FORWARD

PROSPECT	HIGH SCHOOL	SCOUTING REPORT	TOP CHOICES
ELTON BRAND 6'8", 240	Peekskill High School Peekskill, N.Y.	Physical and fast, rebounds...Poor jump and free-throw shooter...26.1 ppg, 16.8 rebs, 7 blocks.	Duke, Kentucky, St. John's, Villanova, Kansas, Georgia Tech, Virginia
JUMAINE JONES 6'8", 230	Mitchell-Baker Camilla, Ga.	Combines athleticism, strength, and sweet shot...32.3 ppg, 12 rebs, 3 assists, 3 blocks.	Georgia, UConn, N.C. State, Tulane
RYAN HUMPHREY 6'7", 205	B.T. Washington Tulsa, Okla.	Skywalker is also blue-chip linebacker/tight end...19.1 ppg, 11.5 rebs, 6 blocks for state champ.	Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, UCLA
JARRON COLLINS 6'10", 240	Harvard-Westlake North Hollywood, Calif.	Stellar facing-the-basket skills...14.3 ppg, 10.6 rebs, 4.3 assists, 60% FG.	Stanford, UCLA, Arizona, Duke, Pepperdine
LAMAR WRIGHT 6'9", 210	Carter High School Dallas, Texas	Agile, natural scorer drills jump shots to 20'...25 ppg, 12 rebs, 3 assists, 3 steals.	Verbally committed to Texas
JAMAAL DAVIS 6'8", 212	Merrillville High School Merrillville, Ind.	Versatile, good shooter and ball-handler...19 ppg, 8.2 rebs, 3.8 blocks, 63% FG, 18-6 team.	Verbally committed to Purdue
EDMUND SAUNDERS 6'8", 210	Holy Cross Waterbury, Conn.	Most effective inside...Stock dropped during summer as he hung out on perimeter...28.4 ppg, 12.3 rebs, 21-3 team.	Verbally committed to UConn
RONNIE GRIFFIN 6'9", 245	Maine Central Institute Pittsfield, Maine	Louisville native bulked up, lost some mobility...18 ppg, 9.7 rebs, 5 blocks, 15-8 team.	Louisville, Kentucky, Syracuse, Maryland, Miami (Fla.), UCLA, George Washington, Memphis
BRIAN BERSTICKER 6'10", 200	Kempville High School Virginia Beach, Va.	Agile, long arms, good hands, soft touch...So thin, needs introduction to a good weight program.	N. Carolina, Kentucky, FSU
AARON MCGHEE 6'7", 226	Aurora East High School Aurora, Ill.	Relative unknown, but a star at Nike Camp...Lefthander slams in traffic, knocks in mid-range jump shots.	Illinois, Iowa, DePaul, Northwestern
SHANE BATTIER 6'8", 217	Detroit Country Day Birmingham, Mich.	Superb fundamentals, skill, intelligence, hustle...21.5 ppg, 14.6 rebs, 6.2 blocks, 64% FG for state champ.	Duke, N. Carolina, Michigan State, Michigan, Kansas
LAMAR ODOM 6'9", 215	Christ the King Middle Village, N.Y.	City and state player of year...Exciting ball-handler...17 ppg, 12 rebs, 6 assists, 4 blocks, 26-1 team.	UCLA, St. John's, Kentucky, Michigan, Kansas, UNLV
TRACY MCGRADY 6'8", 205	Mount Zion Christian Academy, Durham, N.C.	Brings whole package—skills, athleticism, and excitement...Auburndale (Fla.) native was surprise of summer...24 ppg, 15 rebs, 9 blocks.	Kentucky, FSU, Miami (Fla.), Florida, Michigan, UNC, Duke, N.C. State
SCHEA COTTON 6'5", 212	St. John Bosco High School Bellflower, Calif.	Hurt shoulder, out until January...An explosive lefty who needs to solve inconsistency...25.7 ppg, 11 rebs, 62.4% FG.	Verbally committed to Long Beach State
RONALD ARTEST 6'6", 223	LaSalle Academy New York, N.Y.	Clever ball-handler maneuvers to the hoop, shuts down opponents' best shooters.	St. John's, Cincinnati, Georgetown, Syracuse, Notre Dame, Seton Hall
CHRIS OWENS 6'7", 227	Duncanville High School Duncanville, Texas	Can play either forward spot...Superior footspeed, jumping ability...Sweet shooter from mid-range.	Kentucky, Oklahoma State, Texas Tech, Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, UNLV
BRIAN WILLIAMS 6'7", 190	Mount Zion Christian Academy, Durham, N.C.	Richmond transfer joins a loaded team...Fast, good stroke...great hangtime...14 ppg, 9 rebs, 4 assists.	Virginia, VCU, UCLA, Duke, Georgetown, UNC-Charlotte, Virginia Tech
REGGIE JESSIE 6'6", 203	Bishop Loughlin High School Brooklyn, N.Y.	Great instincts, does all but hits 3s consistently...19.5 ppg, 7.6 rebs, 4.2 assists, 18-8 team.	St. John's, Providence, W. Virginia, Georgia Tech, Penn State
CAMERON STEPHENS 6'7", 210	South Side High School Fort Wayne, Ind.	Smooth, skilled, relentless offensive machine, inside or out.	Verbally committed to Purdue
MARCUS FIZER 6'6", 233	Arcadia High School Arcadia, La.	Sturdy player...Mystifies foes with slick dribble moves and accurate pull-up jumpers...Bespекted.	Villanova, Temple, Maryland, Minnesota, Iowa State, LSU
TERRANCE MORRIS 6'8", 206	Governor Thomas Johnson High School, Frederick, Md.	A finesse player...Quick, shoots, and handles ball well...21.4 ppg, 13.8 rebs, 5.2 blocks, 62.8% FG, 22-3 team.	Verbally committed to Maryland
CARLOS GILL 6'6", 210	Northern High School Flint, Mich.	Excellent first step, dunks in your face, hits 3s...Spring and summer play enhanced status.	Michigan State, Cincinnati, Ohio State, Eastern Michigan
MYRON ANTHONY 6'7", 215	Fletcher High School Neptune Beach, Fla.	Best in transition, plays taller by being quick off feet...Player of year in high school classification...25.1 ppg, 11.9 rebs, 54% FG, 25-8 team.	Verbally committed to Kentucky
RICKY DAVIS 6'6", 190	North High School Davenport, Iowa	Steadily improving...Some love his acrobatic drives, others say he's an out-of-control ballhog.	Verbally committed to Iowa

who's next?

POINT GUARD

SHOOTING GUARD

CENTER

PROSPECT	HIGH SCHOOL	SCOUTING REPORT	TOP CHOICES
KHALID EL-AMIN 5'10 ¹ / ₂ ", 185	North High School Minneapolis, Minn.	Super shooter controls tempo, is quick defender...24.5 ppg, 7 assists, 29-1 state champ.	Minnesota, Kansas, Cincinnati, Georgetown, Michigan, California
LARRY HUGHES 6'5 ¹ / ₂ ", 174	Christian Brothers St. Louis, Mo.	Can play three positions...MVP of AAU 17-unders, led team to title...21 ppg as junior.	Verbally committed to St. Louis
EDWIN DANIELS 6' 1/2", 170	Walter L. Cohen High School New Orleans, La.	Facetiously called "Greedy" because he's not... Leads, defends superbly, handles, and passes... 18.6 ppg, 6 assists, 6 steals for state champ.	Verbally committed to UNLV
BARON DAVID 6'1 ¹ / ₂ ", 178	Crossroads High School Santa Monica, California	Exceptionally quick and creative...Hawks ball on defense...18 ppg, 9 assists, 7.5 rebs, 3.4 steals, 27-9 team.	Verbally committed to UCLA (pending NCAA inquiry)
TONY HARRIS 5'11 ¹ / ₂ ", 165	East High School Memphis, Tenn.	Penetrator shoots off dribble, sees court well, but must lead better...28.4 ppg, 7 assists for state champ.	Memphis, Tennessee, Arkansas, Georgetown, Kentucky, Temple, Kansas
KENNY BRUNNER 5'9 ¹ / ₂ ", 179	Dominguez High School Compton, Calif.	Super quick, strong, pushes ball downcourt... Erratic shooter...16.1 ppg, 9.8 assists for state champ.	Verbally committed to Fresno State
WILLIAM AVERY 6'2", 180	Oak Hill Academy Mouth of Wilson, Va.	Plays either guard spot...Scores off dribble... Swishes 3s...26.5 ppg, 5.4 assists, 52% FG, 25-4 team.	Duke, Virginia, Kentucky, Syracuse, Georgia, Kansas
RYAN "ARCHIE" MILLER 5'9", 160	Blackhawk High School Beaver Falls, Pa.	Cerebral floor leader scoots past foes, also hits 3s...Two straight state titles...17 ppg, 8 assists.	Verbally committed to N.C. State
DEAN OLIVER 5'10", 155	Mason City High School Mason City, Iowa	Quick, shifty with ball, fine lefty shooter...Iowa player of year...22.3 ppg, 5 assists for state champ.	Verbally committed to Iowa
DION GLOVER 6'4", 210	Cedar Grove High School Ellenwood, Ga.	MVP at adidas ABCD and Five-Star camps... Powerful driver...26.3 ppg, 8.5 rebs, 64% FG, 21-6 team.	Georgia, N.C. State, UConn, Tulane
LUKE RECKER 6'5", 178	DeKalb High School Waterloo, Ind.	Shoots like Steve Alford, jumps like Rex Chapman, can handle ball, too...MVP at Nike Vegas tourney in summer...21 ppg.	Verbally committed to Indiana
ANTHONY PERRY 6'3", 185	St. Anthony's Jersey City, N.J.	Dynamic driver also hits long 3s...19.5 ppg, 7 rebs, 3.5 assists, 2 steals for 31-0 state champ.	St. John's, Rutgers, Seton Hall, Syracuse, Georgetown, Duke
BYRON MOUTON 6'5", 190	Rayne High School Rayne, La.	Sharpshooter with elevation can always get his shot...Excelled in AAU 17-unders...32.7 ppg as junior.	Tulane, Arkansas, N.C. State
KENNY GREGORY 6'4", 178	Independence High School Columbus, Ohio	Dynamite finisher in transition has now honed jumpshot to 20'...Needs to improve ballhandling.	Kansas, Clemson, Cincinnati
MAX OWENS 6'5", 195	Mount Zion Christian Academy, Durham, N.C.	Excellent ball-handler, one-on-one scorer, 3-point range...24.2 ppg, 6.3 rebs, 59.1% FG, 22-10 team.	Verbally committed to N. Carolina
ESTABAN WEAVER 6'3", 196	Independence High School Columbus, Ohio	Lefty with talent...Considered underachiever... 17.4 ppg, 3.8 assists, 56% FG at Maine Central Institute.	Ohio State, Cincinnati, Temple, Rutgers
MARK KARCHER 6'5", 192	St. Francis Baltimore, Md.	Smooth swingman creates opportunities for teammates...24.4 ppg, 13 rebs, 8 assists, 5 steals.	Maryland, Georgetown, Duke, Villanova, Virginia, Temple, UConn
ALBERT MOURING 6'3", 187	Col. Richardson High School Federsburg, Md.	Rangy marksman plays smart, under control... 32.1 ppg as junior...Impressive during summer.	Maryland, UConn, UMass, Kansas, Wake Forest, Xavier, Miami (Fla.)
CHRIS BURGESS 6'10", 235	Woodbridge High School Irvine, Calif.	Combination of Walton and Bird...26.3 ppg, 10.5 rebs, 2.7 blocks, 55% FG, 38 3-pointers, 23-7 team.	Duke, UCLA, Brigham Young, Kentucky, Kansas
BRENDAN HAYWOOD 7'0", 266	Dudley High School Greensboro, N.C.	Rejector (9 blocks in state final) and rebounder is developing scoring (10 ppg)...Played for state champs...Impressive in summer play.	N. Carolina, Clemson, Wake Forest, Miami (Fla.)
MARCUS GRIFFIN 6'9", 220	Manual High School Peoria, Ill.	Quick leaper attacks glass...Averaged 18.8 ppg for state titlist, but offense is unpolished beyond 10'.	Illinois, Iowa, Purdue, Cincinnati, Georgetown, Indiana
MELVIN ELY 6'10", 210	Thornton High School Harvey, Ill.	Defender-deluxe, shoots well...Needs to add muscle to frame...13.5 ppg, 10 rebs, 6 blocks, 31-1 team.	Kentucky, UMass, Syracuse, Wisconsin, Cincinnati
ERIC CHENOWETH 7'1", 232	Villa Park High School Villa Park, Calif.	Lacks upper-body strength, but has skill and plays hard...Good high-post shooter...Great potential.	Verbally committed to Kansas
JASON COLLINS 6'11", 241	Harvard-Westlake North Hollywood, Calif.	Strong low-post player is package with forward Jarron, his twin...20.2 ppg, 14.6 rebs, 70% FG for state champ.	Stanford, UCLA, Arizona, Duke, Pepperdine
ALVIN JONES III 6'11", 229	Kathleen High School Lakeland, Fla.	Good athlete, but eye injury has slowed progress... 16.1 ppg, 10 rebs, 6 blocks, 58% FG, 25-8 team.	Georgia Tech, N.C. State, Florida
RON KELLEY 6'10", 225	Rains High School Emory, Texas	Emerged as a prime prospect during summer... Runs, rebounds, rejects: 21 ppg, 14 bounds, 4 blocks.	Cincinnati, N.C. State, Arkansas, UNLV, Oklahoma State, Arizona State, TCU, Arizona

stats all, folks

Last year's numbers for the guys who came back

Scoring

	G	TFG	3FG	FT	PTS.	AVG.
Bubba Wells, Austin Peay	30	312	34	131	789	26.3
Bonzi Wells, Ball St.	28	269	31	143	712	25.4
Tunji Awojobi, Boston U.	29	253	3	149	658	22.7
Reggie Freeman, Texas	31	237	87	134	695	22.4
Jason Daisy, Northern Iowa	27	208	68	119	603	22.3
Keith Van Horn, Utah	32	236	54	160	686	21.4
Troy Hudson, Southern Ill.	25	179	93	82	533	21.3
Andre Hoard, NE Ill.	27	223	26	97	569	21.1
Zendon Hamilton, St. John's	27	179	0	204	562	20.8
Damion Walker, TCU	30	230	0	156	616	20.5
Dedric Willoughby, Iowa St.	33	204	88	180	676	20.5

Field Goal Percentage (Min. 5 FG Made Per Game)

	G	FG	FGA	PCT.
Alexander Koul, Geo. Washington	29	163	254	64.2
Terquin Mott, Coppin St.	28	208	326	63.8
Antawn Jamison, N. Carolina	32	201	322	62.4
Greg Smith, Delaware	27	173	282	61.3
Brian Skinner, Baylor	27	187	311	60.1
Rashon Turner, F. Dickinson	27	147	251	58.6
Nate Huffman, Central Mich.	20	113	193	58.5
Tunji Awojobi, Boston U.	29	253	435	58.2
Kenny Thomas, New Mexico	33	170	294	57.8
Paul Rogers, Gonzaga	30	163	282	57.8

3-Point Field Goal Percentage (Min. 1.5 Made Per Game and 40%)

	G	FG	FGA	PCT.
Joe Stafford, Western Carolina	30	58	110	52.7
Ricky Peral, Wake Forest	32	51	100	51.0
Aaron Brown, Central Mich.	26	51	104	49.0
Isaac Fontaine, Washington St.	29	66	136	48.5
Mike DeRocckis, Drexel	31	85	178	47.8
Pete Lisicky, Penn St.	27	89	189	47.1
Justin Jones, Utah St.	33	77	165	46.7
Shane Miller, Fairfield	25	49	105	46.7
Jason Sutherland, Missouri	33	69	148	46.6
Stuart Sullivan, Evansville	27	42	92	45.7

Free Throw Percentage (Min. 2.5 Made Per Game)

	G	FT	FTA	PCT.
Mike Dillard, Sam Houston St.	25	63	68	92.6
Roderick Howard, N.C.-Charlotte	29	93	103	90.3
Geoff Billet, Rutgers	26	72	80	90.0
Derek Grimm, Missouri	33	100	113	88.5
Marcus Wilson, Evansville	25	75	85	88.2
Nod Carter, Middle Tenn. St.	27	104	118	88.1
Alhamisi Simms, Md.-Balt. Coun.	27	74	84	88.1
Jason Sutherland, Missouri	33	114	130	87.7
Terrence Martin, St. Francis	26	84	96	87.5
Jonathan Pixley, Samford	27	138	159	86.8

Assists

	G	NO.	AVG.
Brevin Knight, Stanford	29	212	7.3
Aaron Hutchins, Marquette	31	215	6.9
Colby Pierce, Austin Peay	30	205	6.8
Jamar Smiley, Illinois St.	34	229	6.7
Wes Flanigan, Auburn	32	214	6.7
Edgar Padilla, UMass	37	247	6.7
Anthony Johnson, Charleston (S.C.)	29	193	6.7
Kareem Reid, Arkansas	33	219	6.6
Jacque Vaughn, Kansas	34	223	6.6
Dominick Young, Fresno St.	29	190	6.6

Rebounding

	G	NO.	AVG.
Adonal Foyle, Colgate	29	364	12.6
Tim Duncan, Wake Forest	32	395	12.3
Thaddeus DeLaney, Chas. (S.C.)	29	330	11.4
Kyle Snowden, Harvard	26	289	11.1
Tunji Awojobi, Boston U.	29	314	10.8
James Harper, South Fla.	28	291	10.4
H.L. Coleman, Wyoming	29	301	10.4
Zendon Hamilton, St. John's	27	277	10.3
Devin Davis, Miami (O)	29	287	9.9
Antawn Jamison, N. Carolina	32	309	9.7
Frantz Pierre-Louis, Wagner	24	233	9.7

Blocked Shots

	G	NO.	AVG.
Adonal Foyle, Colgate	29	165	5.7
Jerome James, Florida A&M	27	119	4.4
Peter Aluma, Liberty	29	113	3.9
Tim Duncan, Wake Forest	32	120	3.8
Calvin Booth, Penn St.	28	101	3.6
Lorenzo Coleman, Tenn. Tech	28	96	3.4
Jelani McCoy, UCLA	31	102	3.3
Brian Skinner, Baylor	27	82	3.0
Jason Lawson, Villanova	32	95	3.0
Erik Nelson, Vermont	27	71	2.6
Kelvin Cato, Iowa St.	27	71	2.6
Kirill Misychenko, The Citadel	25	65	2.6

Steals

	G	NO.	AVG.
Andre Hoard, NE Ill.	27	97	3.6
Ben Larson, Cal Poly SLO	29	100	3.4
Bonzi Wells, Ball St.	28	87	3.1
Edgar Padilla, UMass	37	108	2.9
Charles Thomas, Northern Ariz.	26	72	2.8
Sidney Coles, Marshall	26	70	2.7
Darius Burton, Hofstra	27	71	2.6
Kevin Batiste, Alcorn St.	21	55	2.6
Jermaine Watts, DePaul	29	75	2.6
Dominick Young, Fresno St.	29	74	2.6

Look familiar?

The SEC rules, but the Cardinal will rock Cincy.

These are mighty heady times in the world of women's basketball. From Rebecca Lobo's Cinderella season to the Dream Team's gold-medal romp through the Olympics, the action the last couple of years has never been better. And now we've got two professional leagues set to duke it out for the nation's emerging stars, not to mention that the sneaker companies have finally caught on.

But before we take that giant leap forward, let's pause to consider the college game, which, last we checked, still boasted the best and the brightest this sport has to offer.

Right now, all eyes are on the SEC, where three of our Final Four teams are revving their engines. Pay attention to their returning superstars. Chamique Holdsclaw of Tennessee. Shalonda Enis of Alabama. La'Keshia Frett of Georgia. All made our All-American teams. All are planning to rule Cincinnati in March.

But lest you think all the action is in the South, cast your eyes to the West Coast, where Stanford has been planning its revenge since last season's semifinal loss to the Lady Bulldogs. All five starters, including the best backcourt in the country, are back to greet Tara VanDerveer, who returns from her 60-game undefeated year as coach of the U.S. National Team. For a preview of our national championship game, be on

your couch for the State Farm Hall of Fame Tip-Off Classic on Nov. 17, when the Cardinal hosts the Crimson Tide on national TV.

As for the rest of the Sweet 16, there'll be more jockeying for position than in an episode of *Singled Out*. UConn may have fallen out of the top four, but they're still strong contenders, with Kara Wolters and Nykesha Sales leading the way. Angie Lee's exceptional recruiting should finally pay off for Iowa, as the class of 1998 comes into its own. And if you like to root for the underdog—and we do—check out LSU, Arizona, Michigan State, and UCLA.

The Dream Team is a fading summer memory. The two new women's pro leagues are still an unfulfilled promise. Does that mean women's basketball, after a string of headline-grabbing sellouts in Palo Alto and Storrs, has gone flat?

No way. A few household names have moved on, but there are plenty of new ones ready to take their places. Until further notice, the college game remains what it's always been: the best game in town.—Mimi Griffin

BONUS@ESPN

On Dec. 9, we'll be updating our team previews and posting them at:
<http://ESPN.SportsZone.com>

ALL-AMERICANS

1ST TEAM

- F – Chamique Holdsclaw, Tennessee
- F – Shalonda Enis, Alabama
- C – Kara Wolters, UConn
- G – Kate Starbird, Stanford
- G – Jamila Wideman, Stanford

2ND TEAM

- F – Angie Potthoff, Penn State
- F – La'Keshia Frett, Georgia
- C – Tangela Smith, Iowa
- G – Nykesha Sales, UConn
- G – Ticha Penicheiro, Old Dominion

CONFERENCE WINNERS

AMERICA EAST: Maine ACC: Virginia ATLANTIC 10: George Washington BIG EAST: UConn BIG SOUTH: Radford COLONIAL: Old Dominion IVY: Harvard METRO ATLANTIC: Loyola (Md.) NORTHEAST: Mt. St. Mary's PATRIOT: Navy BIG TEN: Iowa BIG 12: Kansas MIDWESTERN COLLEGIATE: Butler MISSOURI VALLEY: S.W. Missouri State SOUTHLAND: Stephen F. Austin SOUTHWESTERN ATHLETIC: Grambling State SUN BELT: Western Kentucky CONFERENCE USA: Southern Mississippi MID-AMERICAN: Kent MID-CONTINENT: Youngstown State MID-EASTERN: Howard OHIO VALLEY: Middle Tennessee State SEC: Alabama SOUTHERN: Appalachian State TRANS AMERICA: Florida International BIG SKY: Montana BIG WEST: UC-Santa Barbara PAC-10: Stanford WAC: Colorado State WEST COAST: San Francisco



stanford

WHO TO WATCH

KATE STARBIRD

With the size and the moves to post up her opponents, why is Stanford's returning high scorer (20.1 ppg) playing the perimeter and running the ball up the court? Because she can. Three years after being named to the Pac-10 All-Freshman team, the senior Army brat turned gym rat is zeroing in on the Cardinal all-time points record, as well as the first national title in Palo Alto since 1992. Oh, and one other thing: is that a great name, or what?



March 1997. Just months after coaching the U.S. Olympic team to gold, Tara VanDerveer leads her Stanford team to its third NCAA title.

It could happen. It should happen. We say it *will* happen.

Leaving Palo Alto for a year to guide the only Dream Team that matters was an agonizing decision. She finally accepted the Olympic coaching job after realizing how much she could learn and bring back to her team. In her absence, co-head coaches Amy Tucker and Marianne Stanley took the Cardinal to the NCAA semifinals before losing to Georgia, 86-76.

But now VanDerveer's back, she's hungry, and she re-inherits a team that has championship written all over it.

After her Atlanta success, VanDerveer can expect comparisons between Team USA and the Cardinal. She may say the ingredients are the same for any winning team, but it's a lot different with student-athletes—you can't run two-a-day practices for a year.

Even if NCAA rules permitted it, extended practices wouldn't be necessary. Stanford—29-3 last season—returns its top seven scorers, including two potential All-Americans, Kate Starbird and Jamila Wideman. Ten players have Final Four experience. So look for VanDerveer's golden touch to continue.

THE PLAYERS

Star Bright

All five starters return for the Cardinal, led by 6'2" senior forward Starbird (20.1 ppg, 4.7 rpg). With the ball-handling skills of a point

KEY STAT

1,087

Whew! That's the number of minutes senior Kate Starbird played last season, most of any Cardinal player. It averages out to almost 34 a game. She'd play all 40, but even the nation's best need a little breather. Plus, with one of the deepest benches in the country, there are plenty of quality players to sub in.

guard, the co-Pac-10 player of the year draws comparisons to Rick Barry and Pete Maravich because she can score from anywhere on the court. Sweet-shooting six-foot junior Vanessa Nygaard, who hit nearly 40 percent from beyond the arc and led the team in rebounding last year, plays opposite Starbird. Junior Olympia Scott brings size (6'2"), touch underneath (10.3 ppg), and board savvy (5.1 rpg) to the frontcourt.

Wideman handles the point, tossing in nearly 10 points and dishing 5.5 assists per. Charmin Smith returns on the wing. Both are seniors and their experience is unmatched in the Pac-10.

The tallest bench in women's basketball boasts six returning players over six feet. Center Naomi Multiauoepile (6'3") started five games and was second in shooting percentage last year (.495). Junior Heather Owen (6'2") holds her own in the paint. And sophomore Chandra Benton (6'7") is the tallest player in Stanford history. Stanford won't have the services of volleyball sensation Kristin Folk, who is bypassing the hoops season.

With a bench top-heavy with paint patrollers, VanDerveer loaded up on guards in the recruiting season. Three join the program—5'10" Christina Batastini, 5'6" Milena Flores, and 5'9" Melody Peterson—with the expectation that they'll make immediate contributions.

There's no weak link in the lineup. There's size and, like past championship teams, this team can run. Starbird is the obvious go-to player, but Wideman's also dangerous inside and Nygaard can score consistently from downtown. Hopes are high; they should be.

LOWDOWN

Tara-Ball

VanDerveer has a rep as a miracle worker. She built Ohio State into a national power before leaving for Stanford in 1985. Five years later, the Cardinal won the first of two national championships. She spent the last year beating the socks off teams from all over the world. All she has to do now is pick up where she left off. Piece of cake, right?

Problem is, Tennessee and Old Dominion represent more of a challenge than, say, the Australian National Team. The schedule provides an early taste of what's to come at Tourney time, with matchups against Alabama, Tennessee, ODU, and Colorado—all before New Year's Eve.

But Stanford has a decided edge on the best of the rest: they've got every element of a national title program: talent, experience, height, depth, and one of the best coaching staffs.

All that, as VanDerveer knows, doesn't guarantee victory. That's what they have games for.

alabama

After its draining 78-76 overtime loss to Stanford in a West Regional semifinal last year, a silent Alabama team boarded the plane home from Seattle. In a cruel twist of fate, the flight was routed through Charlotte, N.C., site of the women's Final Four.

As the players walked through the Charlotte terminal to change planes, they passed constant reminders of what could have been. Local children had lined the halls with a Final Four-themed art show, banners welcomed fans and players to the event, and souvenir stands hawked T-shirts, mocking the team at every turn. After a mercifully short layover, the Tide left Charlotte a couple of days before the Finals were to begin.

Memories have given way to expectations in Tuscaloosa—and for good reason. Alabama returns four starters from last year's Sweet 16 team. That's fine, but you want better news? The fifth starting spot goes to Yolanda Watkins, an All-Conference post player who took last year off to recover from surgery.

Alabama visits Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum on Jan. 22 to play Kentucky. We're saying that's just a warmup for a longer Cincy stay in March, at the Final Four.

THE PLAYERS

Juco-Powered

It took a little bad luck for 'Bama to end up so lucky. In the summer of '95, Watkins blew out her knee in a pickup game and had to red-shirt what would have been her senior season. The 6'2" center, an All-SEC pick her sophomore and junior years, spent '95-96

rehabbing her knee and undergoing jaw surgery.

In Watkins' absence, Shalonda Enis took over—and then some. The 6'1" juco transfer earned All-America status—only the second Tide player to do so—while leading the team in scoring (23.9 ppg)

KEY STAT

101

Saudia Roundtree this, Michelle Marciniak that. How can a guard make a name for herself with superstars like that in her conference? Well, Brittney Ezell didn't get much time in the limelight, but her stats were glowing. She had 101 more assists than turnovers last season, 180 to 79 in 32 games—a better differential than Roundtree (195 to 117 in 33) or Marciniak (156 to 101 in 36).

and rebounding (9.5). The year before, Watkins had averaged 16 and 9.2.

Now they're in there together. Think Godzilla, tap-dancing on Tokyo, looking up to see Mothra joining in the fun.

Adding depth inside are two more juco transfers, including Enis' former teammate Tausha Mills, a 6'2" junior who was national juco player of the year in '96. LaToya Caudle, a 6'3" junior out of Northwest Community College, was the Alabama juco player of the year.

Steady junior point guard Brittney Ezell (5.6 assists) has been a starter since her rookie season. Guard Leah Monteith, also a junior, is the top defensive player.

Then there's soph Dominique Canty, a Freshman All-American who has springs for legs. The shooting guard's 15.2 points per made her the only Tide player besides Enis (14.6) to average double figures.

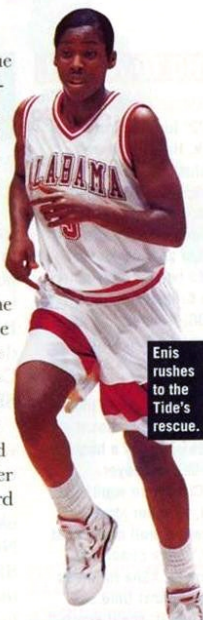
Guard Pam Duncan, who started 12 games, and forward Latrish Jones, who started two, are the most experienced of the three other returnees off the bench. The newcomers are headed by guard Nicole Caruth, 1996's Miss Basketball in Alabama. She's joined by athletic All-State forward Reagan Croyle and juco transfer Rebecca Baragry, a 5'8" guard from Australia.

LOWDOWN

Next in Line?

Five SEC schools, Alabama included, have made the NCAA Final Four. Only Tennessee has won the title. In the 17-year history of the SEC Tournament, 'Bama has been runner-up three times. With Watkins and Enis together and the deepest bench in the SEC, 'Bama thinks this is the year it gets that conference title and joins Tennessee in the NCAA winner's club.

Could be, but it won't be easy. The season starts against Stanford on Nov. 17—this televised rematch of the West Regional semifinal might be an NCAA title-game preview. In the SEC, 'Bama plays Auburn home and away, Georgia in Athens, but catches Tennessee and Vanderbilt at home. All this just to spend some quality time in Cincinnati. Our advice? Stay away from the chili when you get there—it's way overrated. You're not.



WHO TO WATCH

SHALONDA ENIS

The 6'1" post player from Celeste, Texas (pop. 760) took Division I by storm last season after dominating high school and juco ranks. Now, the All-American is compared endlessly to Sheryl Swoopes. Enis can play all over the court. Her perimeter shooting rivals any two guard in the SEC. She puts the ball on the floor like a small forward, cutting through the middle so deftly that she draws double- and triple-teams. Her strength inside allows her to compete with power forwards and centers. But she wouldn't be comfortable at point. Just as well: 'Bama needs somebody to get her the ball.

tennessee

WHO TO WATCH

CHAMIQUE HOLDSCLAW

A 6'2" forward from New York, Holdsclaw was freshman of the year and made several All-America lists. Her team-high 583 points made her the first rookie scoring leader since two-time All-American Bridgette Gordon in 1986. Her game is more complete than Gordon's—or any woman's since Cheryl Miller. She's quick, she shoots like a guard, and she has the brute power of a back-to-the-basket player.

"Chamique wants the ball, whether she's shooting well or not that day," says coach Pat Summitt. "She believes that the next time she touches it, she'll score."



If Pat Summitt wasn't already the consensus choice as the planet's best women's coach, Tennessee's wondrous march to a record fourth NCAA title surely cemented the honor.

In last year's final games, she willed the Lady Vols—a solid but unspectacular team with one great player—to a miraculous second-half comeback vs. Virginia in the East Regional final, an overtime defeat of defending champion Connecticut, and an 83-65 rout of SEC rival Georgia for the crown.

This year, Tennessee operates without the element of surprise that comes with an underdog rep. It also faces a tough schedule, with 11 nonleague games vs. NCAA Tournament teams, six SEC games with Tournament teams, and the preseason NIT (only two of 16 invited teams missed the Big Dance).

Tennessee will get to the Sweet 16—it always does—but it won't be easy. That's okay by Summitt. Easy or hard, she always figures out a way to win.

THE PLAYERS

Summitt Calls

With Chamique Holdsclaw bringing her 16.2 points and 9.1 rebounds per game to the tip-off, the Vols have a head start on the season. The 6'2" sophomore forward with the killer instinct is an early favorite for player of the year honors—and her game's getting better.

Problem is, Tennessee's never won it all twice in a row, and Summitt lost two key players to graduation. Final Four MVP Michelle Marciniak and team leader Latina Davis combined for nearly 33 percent of the Vols' offense, and

KEY STAT

0-3

That was Tennessee's regular-season mark against last year's other Final Four teams. A final record of 32-4 makes the sting even sharper. Can you say redemption? The Lady Vols play all three again this year, with back-to-back mid-December visits from Georgia and Stanford and a trip to Hartford in the first week of the New Year.

Marciniak led the conference in steals (three per game).

For Tennessee to repeat, Summitt must develop some offensive help for Holdsclaw. Luckily, there's plenty to choose from.

Abby Conklin, a 6'3" senior who could be a center, plays the wing. The Vols most consistent three-point shooter, Conklin hit 42 percent from bonus range and led the team in blocks.

Senior Pashen Thompson and junior Tiffani Johnson will alternate at center. The two combined to average almost 16.6 points and 13.5 rebounds. Thompson averaged just under 10 points in 26 minutes. Johnson, a 6'4" North Carolina native, is back after an off-season disciplinary suspension that prevented her from attending the team's post-victory White House visit.

The potential trouble spot for Summitt is in the backcourt, where she needs to select two starters from a pack of largely unproven guards. The likely winner looks to be junior Laurie Milligan after her fellow backup, sophomore Kellie Jolly, had

reconstructive knee surgery in early October.

As always, the Lady Vol bench is rich with talent, beginning with sophomore forward Brynne Laxton (4.2 points, 2.6 rebounds in only 13 minutes). Sophomore Misty Greene can play some small forward in a pinch, and freshman Niya Butts, a six-foot forward who set a school record in the shot put at her Americus, Ga., high school, rounds out a rookie class that includes second-team All-Americans Kyra Elzy, a 6'1" forward from Kentucky, and Lashonda Stephens, a 6'3" center out of Georgia.

LOWDOWN

View from the Top

At first glance, Tennessee seems way too callow in the backcourt to make a serious run at a fifth title. Mustering a champion's energy every night is tough for seasoned starters, let alone untested rookies and inexperienced backups. Then there's that schedule, which is by far the toughest in the country.

But three things about Tennessee convince you otherwise. First, the Vols play scrappy when they need to. The team made up 17 points in the last 17 minutes against Virginia to secure their Final Four spot. Second, they take it one game at a time. After losing three previous matchups with UConn in the last five minutes, they beat the crowd favorite when it really counted—in the Tournament. And third, they make the best of what they've got. Holdsclaw may be the Vols' only star, but look where that got them last year: to the Final Four, where anything can happen.

georgia

Ah, the South in springtime. Azaleas and dogwoods blooming, cider and warm peanuts at roadside stands. April's a beautiful time of year to be alive and in Georgia—unless, of course, you play for the University of Georgia. Then that warm glow feels more like a cold shoulder.

Don't get us wrong. Only three other teams have racked up as many Final Four appearances as Georgia's four. Unfortunately, the Lady Bulldogs also bear the burden of being the only one of those programs never to win the crown. And when the latest loss is to SEC rival Tennessee, April's downright depressing. Then again, that's life in the toughest conference in women's basketball.

Asking Georgia coach Andy Landers what it's like to play in the SEC is like asking Kermit the Frog what it's like to be green. It's not easy, but it's all he knows. Landers has a 417-124 record in his 17 years as head coach. His program has produced two national players of the year, two conference players of the year, 22 SEC first-teamers, and two Olympians. With four returning starters this year, he may finally get that NCAA trophy for his mantle.

THE PLAYERS

Don't Frett

Georgia lost national Player of the Year Saudia Roundtree, but the other starters—all seniors—are back. Their leader is 6'3" forward La'Keshia Frett. An honorable mention All-American last year, Frett is a coach's dream: hard-working, humble, and highly skilled. She's more comfortable playing small forward, but when

Tiffany Walker went out with a leg injury last season, Frett moved to the power spot and averaged 14.6 points and 8.7 rebounds.

If Walker stays healthy, she'll likely regain her old position, where she should be Georgia's top rebounder, and allow Frett to go back to the three spot. Inside, Walker pairs with Tracy Henderson, a potent scorer (14.1 last year)

KEY STAT

14

Coaches preach that stuff about rebounding winning championships for one reason: it's true. Georgia was outrebounded 14 times last season, including a championship game debacle against Tennessee that cost them the NCAA title. (Georgia had 39 to Tennessee's 54.) Figure in Georgia's 5 of 24 night-mare from three-point range, and you get an 83-65 Tennessee victory.

and fearsome shot-blocker (72 in 33 games). Henderson and 5'8" guard Kedra Holland-Corn should end up joining Frett among Georgia's top 10 in career scoring.

Now that Roundtree has graduated to the newly founded ABL, Holland-Corn is the key to Georgia's terrific three-guard lineup. Holland-Corn averaged 11.3 points last year and shot 40.7 percent from three-point range. She's joined by 5'7" junior Latrese Bush, who went from 12th in last season's rotation to a starting spot and designation as the team's best defensive player.

Senior Rachel Powell, a two-time Tennessee Miss Basketball in high school, returns at point guard. She's backed up by sophomore Pam Irwin, a 5'8" SEC All-Freshman who averaged 7.1 points in less than 19 minutes off the bench last year. Expect Landers' top recruit, Atlanta native Kiesha Brown, to log serious minutes as well.

LOWDOWN

Road Warriors

Georgia opens the season on the road against ACC tourney champ Clemson. It then hosts Virginia, the ACC regular-season champ. Last year, the Lady Cavs handed Georgia its largest margin of defeat (94-65). The Bulldogs get a shot at revenge when they head to Tennessee Dec. 8.

After tournament trips to Alaska and Las Vegas round out the year, January brings rest—with all but one game at home. Unfortunately, the guest list implies keg party rather than afternoon tea: Penn State, Auburn, Alabama, Ole Miss, and Connecticut.

Landers saw two of his former stars, Teresa Edwards and Katrina McClain, win Olympic gold. Like last year's team, the 1985 team they led choked in the NCAA final. Any more repeat performances and Landers' reputation for nonstop excellence may hit a detour. It's time for the Bulldogs to win a championship. Led by the Splendid Six—seniors Frett, Henderson, Holland-Corn, Powell, Walker, and Brandi Decker—this team definitely can.

And that would make for a great April.



Brown will be top Bulldog before long.

WHO TO WATCH

KIESHA BROWN

A 5'10" freshman guard from Atlanta, the two-time Miss Georgia Basketball led her HS team to back-to-back 31-0 seasons and state titles. As a junior, Brown was the youngest athlete at the Olympic Sports Festival, and last year she won Naismith HS player of the year honors. Her stats are as impressive as the laurels: 12.6 points, 5.5 rebounds, 4.7 steals, and 4.8 assists.

A consummate team player, her game is more controlled and composed than the flashy, run-and-gun style of departed guard Saudia Roundtree.

Brown begins the season backing up a slew of veteran guards. But don't expect her to be on the bench for long.

Not quite ready for

5. CONNECTICUT

The Huskies are the NCAA's Dirty Harry. They should be out of bullets by now, but nobody wants to be the team that risks finding out. Good thing, too, because Geno Auriemma still has two lethal weapons left: senior Kara Wolters, who led the team in scoring and rebounds, and junior guard Nykesha Sales, who racked up 104 steals. Then there are the young guns. Juco All-American Rita Williams, who understudied at point behind Jennifer Rizzotti last season, gets the first shot this year. If she doesn't cut it, Auriemma can trot out *USA Today* National High School Player of the Year Shea Ralph.

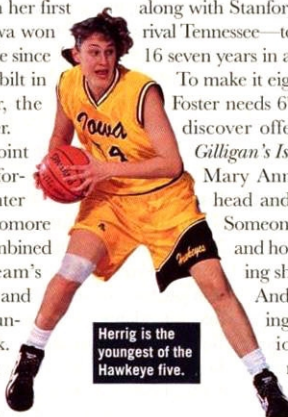
Early tourney games against Western Kentucky and UMass should help the UConn arsenal to gel, but it's the January matchups with Tennessee and Georgia that'll determine whether the Huskies still have enough firepower to crack the Final Four.

6. IOWA

Iowa City winters get awfully cold, but the return of four starters keeps Angie Lee feeling warm and snug. In her first season as head coach, Iowa won its first outright Big Ten title since 1991, then lost to Vanderbilt in the Sweet 16. This year, the Hawkeyes aim even higher.

The four returnees—point guard Nadine Domond, forward Tiffany Gooden, center Tangela Smith, and sophomore forward Amy Herrig—combined for 64 percent of the team's points. That's three juniors and a sophomore, if you're running an experience check. Junior Angela Hamblin takes over at two guard.

But challenges to the stable Hawkeyes will come early and often with games against Arkansas, Texas, and Western Kentucky.



Herrig is the youngest of the Hawkeye five.

7. OLD DOMINION

Last season, Nancy Lieberman-Cline picked her Top 25 with an homage to her alma mater: "Okay, Old Dominion No. 1..." It seemed a lot less like a joke when ODU finished sixth in the polls, losing to Virginia in the Sweet 16.

ODU returns four starters from its 29-3 team, led again by senior point guard Ticha Penicheiro. The chief recipients of her passes—6'5" center/forward Clarisse Machanguana and 6'3" center Nyree Roberts—combined for 34 percent of the team's points.

ODU consistently clobbers its Colonial opponents, but they play some tough nonconference foes, including Stanford, Tennessee, Purdue, and Duke. If ODU can survive those contests, Lieberman-Cline's joke could turn out not to be funny at all—to other teams.



Gamble is a sure bet for the Lady Toppers.



8. VANDERBILT

Vanderbilt is one of only four programs—along with Stanford, Virginia, and arch-rival Tennessee—to advance to the Sweet 16 seven years in a row.

To make it eight straight, coach Jim Foster needs 6'7" Angela Gorsica to discover offense. Remember the *Gilligan's Island* episode in which Mary Ann gets conked on the head and thinks she's Ginger?

Someone should bean Gorsica and hope she wakes up thinking she's Heidi Gillingham. And while we're fantasizing, how about 6'2" junior Na'Sheema Hillmon stepping right into Sheri Sam's very large shoes.

But since neither of them has ever averaged double digits in scoring, the Commodores' MVP will be...their coach.

9. WESTERN KENTUCKY

Three trips to the Final Four. Three knockouts. But with four starters back, this is the year coach Paul Sanderford expects his Lady Toppers to live up to their nickname.

It's going to be an uphill climb, however: out-of-conference powerhouses UConn and Iowa are just two stops on the toughest schedule Sanderford has faced.

Star forward Stacie Gamble gets help from two long-awaited top transfers: Purdue's Leslie Johnson and Duke's Jennifer McGinnis. Johnson, a 6'1" center nicknamed Baby Barkley, is so driven to dominate this season that she dropped 50 pounds, thanks to a thrice-daily workout regime. Sanderford also collared the two best high school players in Kentucky, Jaime Walz and Jamie Britt.

Will that be enough to get the Lady Toppers back to the Final Four? Uh-uh. But 1998 looks very promising.

10. VIRGINIA

The Cavaliers' top goal is avenging their embarrassing fourth-quarter loss to rival Tennessee in last March's regional final.

No small feat, but this is a team with determination—and depth. Junior forward Monick Foote was questionable after off-season ankle surgery, but will be ready before January. Her return takes pressure off 5'7" guard Tora Suber and 6'2" sophomore forward DeMya Walker. Junior Mimi McKinney, sophomore Tiffany Bower, and freshman Renee Robinson battle for the backcourt, while 6'4" junior Tammy Gardner returns from a year off to add much-needed height up front. Soph Lesley Brown, senior Jackie Glessner, and rookie Lauren Swierczak share backup minutes.

The Cavs may have the bench, but the Vols have the star. Our forecast? Another Tennessee waltz.

prime time...

11. KANSAS

Last season, Kansas cracked the Sweet 16 for the first time. Its reward? Tennessee in the semis. Think Martina Hingis vs. Steffi Graf at the U.S. Open. Sure, it's great to get that far, but there's not much a novice can do...except lose.

Worse, the Jayhawks' only true star, point guard Tamecka Dixon, fouled out early in the fourth quarter of that 92-71 loss. Her very uncharacteristic contribution? Six points, not even a third of the Big Eight player of the year's average per game. Blame the flu for that one—coach Marion Washington expects Dixon to reach the next level this season. Ditto returning guard Angie Halbleib, Kansas' best three-point shooter. Rounding out the starters are a dependable senior, Jennifer Trapp; a promising sophomore, Nakia Sanford; and the most vigorously recruited player in the Big 12, 6'2" forward Lynn Pride.

It'll be a wiser, well-rounded bunch that makes the return trip to the Sweet 16.

12. TEXAS TECH

Lady Raiders coach Marsha Sharp—one of the best minds in the game—has a no-brainer strategy this year: get the ball to junior forward Alicia Thompson. Sharp deployed a similar game plan in 1993 when Texas Tech captured the NCAA title. On the receiving end that year? Olympian Sheryl Swoopes.

Including Thompson (17.4 points, 9.2 rebounds per game), three starters return. Soph guards Julie Lake and Rene Hanebutt averaged 11 points apiece, and Lake chipped in a freshman-record 134 assists. Backing them up is Texas' Miss Basketball, Melinda Schmucker.

The Lady Raiders face stiff competition now that they've joined the Big 12. And their 30-game home winning streak—second to Stanford's 32—gets tested Dec. 18 against Tennessee.



13. COLORADO

As an assistant Olympic coach, Ceal Barry experienced the ultimate victory. Now, she's hoping to take the Buffs to a similar level with help from two seniors—6'4" Raegan Scott and 6'3" Erin Scholz. Scholz led the team in points (15.5 per game), rebounds (8.0), and minutes (32.6) last year, while Scott led in blocked shots.

Forward Jen Terry shot 52.9 percent despite a chronic knee injury. She and fellow junior Shelley Garcia figure prominently in the mix. Six players with experience return at guard. La Shena Graham, a 5'4" junior, starts at the point, while the off-guard spot is split among sophomore Michelle Hasheider, junior Alexis Felts, and rookie Rasheeda Clarke.

With all that depth, Barry's biggest dilemma is picking a starting five to battle new foes in the Big 12. Though a national title is out of reach, the Buffs figure to have an interesting winter.

14. N.C. STATE

Coach Kay Yow has two challenges. First, improve on the Wolfpack's third-place conference finish. Second, improve her team's virtually nonexistent chemistry. Fortunately, the two go hand-in-hand.

The key is keeping 6'3" junior center Chasity Melvin focused all season, instead of when the former ACC rookie of the year feels like it.

The rest of the puzzle pieces should fall into place from there: senior forward Umeki Webb, who led the team in assists, the junior frontcourt of Peace Shepard and Rosalyn McLendon, and senior guard Jennifer Howard, the school's three-point record-holder with 238.

The Wolfpack has the talent to challenge for the ACC title. They have the depth. And, after the preseason NIT, they have a fairly easy schedule. Now, if they can all only just get along.

15. PENN STATE

Change is the operative word, as head coach Rene Portland welcomes six new players, the most in her 16 years at Penn State. Gone are 1,000-point scorers Tina Nicholson and Katina Mack. Gone is all-time leading shot-blocker Kim Calhoun. Gone, even, is tiny Rec Hall, replaced by the sparkling 15,300-seat Bryce Jordan Center.

A few things look happily familiar—namely, returning starters Angie Potthoff and Tiffany Longworth. Potthoff, a 6'1" forward, averaged 18.5 points and 9.1 rebounds, while Longworth set a school record with 60 three-pointers last year.

Penn State had its third consecutive 25-win season last year and won a second consecutive Big Ten Tournament title. Despite its youth and a schedule that includes seven NCAA Tournament teams, repeats aren't out of the question. You know, the more things change...

16. LOUISIANA TECH

Last season, the Lady Techsters lost to Georgia in the Tourney and then lost four starters to graduation and one more—forward Maquisha Walker—to injury. After 14 seasons and nearly 400 wins, coach Leon Barmore is facing the dreaded "R" word. No, not retirement, Rebuilding.

He began with his sophomores. Forward Monica Maxwell has the numbers and point guard LaQuan Stallworth has the leadership skills. Forward Amanda Wilson is the team's next great shooter. Up front is 6'3" center Priya Gilmore, daughter of former NBA center Artis Gilmore. For the final starting spot, Barmore dug into his four-star recruiting class—five of six signees were All-Americans—and chose 5'5" Tamicha Jackson.

It's a start, but unless Barmore can turn his baby Techsters into Lady Techsters overnight, this will be the first year this program doesn't get an invite to the party.



Five players

NADINE DOMOND

Guard 5'9"
Junior, Iowa

The Bridgeport, Conn., native arrived on the Iowa City campus in 1995 with a flashy playground style that had made her the best high school point guard in the country. One of six blue-chip recruits that fall, Domond ran into a traffic jam at the point and was shifted to two guard.

Hawkeye coaches dissected her game like a laboratory frog, but her fundamentals and ball-handling weren't the only things Domond transformed. Leaving a depressed eastern industrial city for a small Midwest college town was a shock, but it's been a healthy break from what she calls "urban distractions." Two solid seasons helped her team improve from 11-17 to 27-4. Now that last year's starter Karen Clayton has graduated, it's a seasoned Domond who takes her second shot at the point.

Her touted class of six is down to five, and they're approaching their junior season with the same realistic expectations coach Angie Lee encouraged in their first: one practice, one game, one victory at a time.

CLARISSE MACHANGUANA

Forward/Center 6'5"
Senior, Old Dominion

Free tip for college coaches looking to upgrade their programs: make sure your passport's current. At least that's the route Old Dominion is taking to the Sweet 16. Insiders are buzzing about guard Ticha Penicheiro, but the most sizable contribution to the Lady Monarchs' up-tempo offense comes from Clarisse Machanguana.

"The pool of big players is just larger over in Europe than here," says coach Wendy Larry, who recruited the Mozambique native out of a Portuguese league along with Penicheiro. The pair brought the Lady Monarchs' import total to four.

In two seasons at ODU, Machanguana is set to lead the team to at least another 29-3 season, relying on her smarts, her agility, and her 65.3 percent field goal shooting (seventh in the nation).

And while the language barrier has been tough to overcome, the 23-year-old says she hasn't really had to change her basketball style, except to adapt to the increased pushing and elbowing of the American game.

KARA WOLTERS

Center 6'7"
Senior, Connecticut

First Rebecca Lobo, then Jennifer Rizzotti. Now junior Nykeshia Sales is being touted as the next great Husky. So how does Kara Wolters—who's been there all along—feel about still being overlooked?

"I'm used to it," says the senior, whose main weakness is—or used to be—that she plays too nice, not an uncommon UConn trait. A summer training with the U.S. Women's Dream Team may have fixed that. "You can't be a nice girl and play at that level," Wolters says. "I know that now."

The only true center in the women's college game, Wolters racked up enough blocks (105 last year) to rank seventh in the nation. She also averaged 18.8 points and 7.9 rebounds, and has scored in double digits in 40 straight games over two seasons.

Wolters has the scoring touch, the defensive skills, the maturity, and now the toughness to step into the spotlight. Don't be surprised if she turns out to be this season's lead Husky.



By Christine Humphreys

to watch

STEPHANIE WHITE

Guard 5'11"
Sophomore, Purdue

In her first season, White started all 31 games, tallying 336 points, 138 assists, and 62 steals. The Indiana native was mentored by assistant coach and former Purdue star MaChelle Joseph. Her team was ranked 15th by the AP. White's future was glowing.

Then it all slipped away. Coach Lin Dunn was fired. Joseph, whose records White was already smashing, went down with Dunn. All but two of White's teammates transferred. The highly recruited guard considered fleeing with them, but didn't want to sit out the mandatory season.

With the arrival of Nell Fortner, Purdue's rebuilding began. White is now the centerpiece of a ragtag team that includes the three returnees, four freshmen, two walk-ons, and a fifth-year former track athlete. Hardly a nurturing environment for a young star, but White is taking it one season at a time.

"We're not dropping off the face of the Earth," she says. "We'll take our beatings and lose some, but it will just make us better—and make me stronger."

JAMIE WALZ

Guard 5'9"
Freshman, Western Kentucky

In a state where the Holy Trinity means God, Country, and College Hoops, no one—except maybe Rick Pitino—is under more pressure than Jamie Walz. She'd racked up a pre-college total of 4,948 points. She was labeled the nation's best prospect. She was the home-state sweetheart from Fort Thomas.

Walz had her pick of big-time programs, but chose Western Kentucky "to give back to the people who supported me." Then, when she opted for a summer of R&R at her family's cabin, the rumors began to fly. Some said a winter knee injury had ruined her career. Some said she was pregnant.

The 19-year-old was stunned. "I gave them six years of solid high school ball," Walz says, "and they can't give me a summer to let my body rest."

Now that she's arrived at Bowling Green, there's only one rumor she cares about squelching—the one that says she'll crumble under the pressure of facing better players for the first time.

Robin Roberts' Bests

BEST FRESHMAN: Kiesha Brown, Georgia. This do-it-all Bulldog will make an immediate impact in Andy Landers' system.

BEST SENIOR: Kara Wolters, UConn. A Huskies return to the Final Four for the third straight year rests on her big shoulders.

BEST JUCO TRANSFER: Tausha Mills, Alabama. The juco player of the year, she led Texas' Trinity Valley to the national title.

BEST IN THE CLUTCH: Chamique Holdsclaw, Tennessee. That 16-point, 14-rebound performance in last year's national championship game dispelled any doubts.

MOST UNDERRATED: Angie Potthoff, Penn State. This Lady Lion plays a lot bigger than 6'1".

BEST STARTING FIVE: Stanford. The same five from last year except—get this—they're being motivated again by Dream Team coach Tara VanDerveer.

BEST BENCH: Alabama. Last season, eight players averaged double figures in minutes played. This year, Rick Moody gets to choose from four returning starters, three juco transfers, and All-SEC performer Yolanda Watkins, who missed last season.

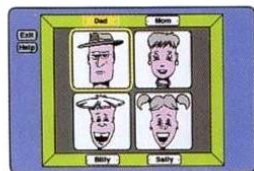
BEST COACHING STAFF: Tennessee. Four national titles for Pat Summitt and assistants Mickie DeMoss, Holly Warlick, and Al Brown. Top that.

BEST HIRE: Nell Fortner, Purdue. The Lady Boilermakers rebound from the Lin Dunn mess with a proven recruiter who spent last season as VanDerveer's assistant with the U.S. National Team. Golden? You bet.



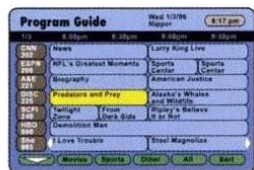
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